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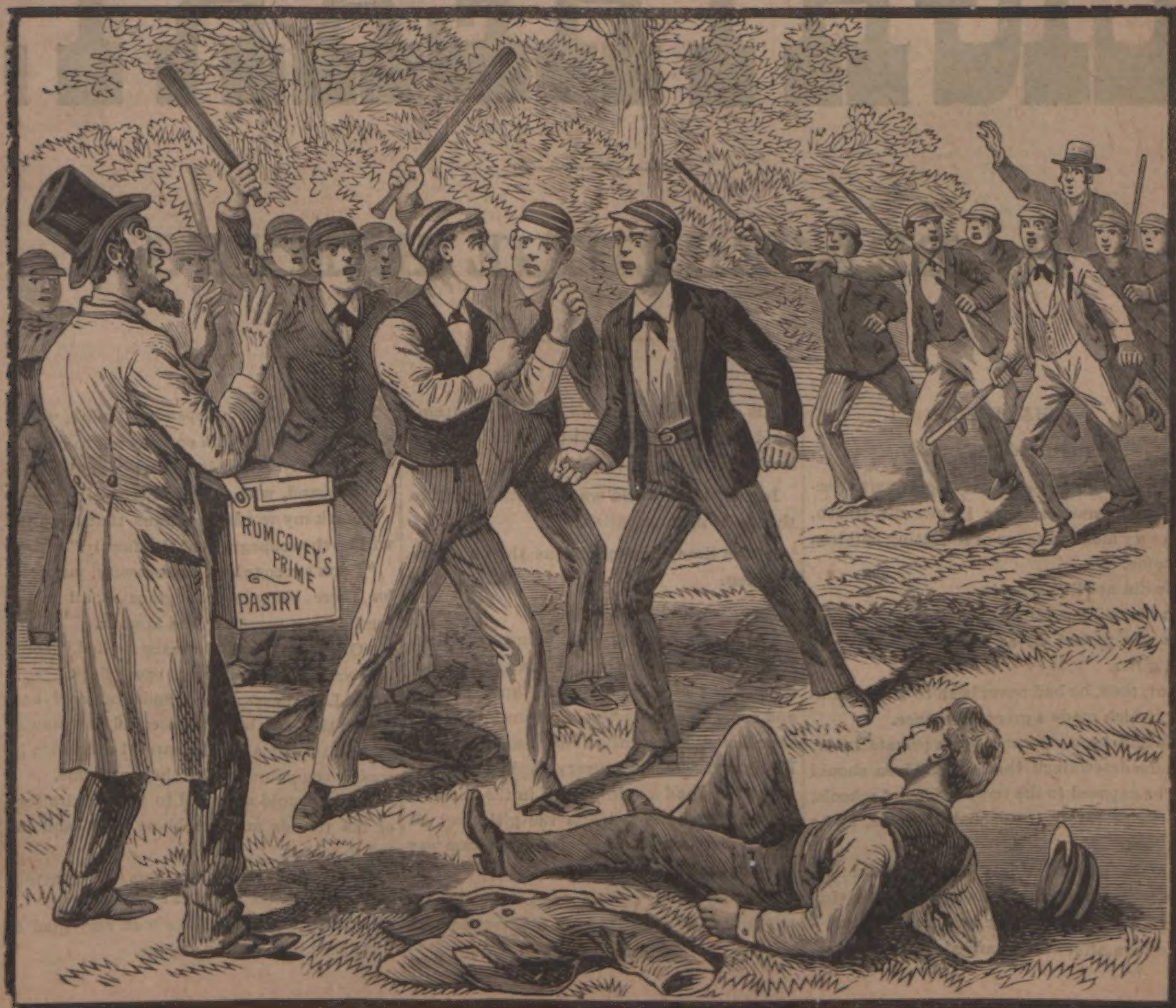
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Vol. II.

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DICK LIGHTHEART.

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.



Just as Fowler and the others arrived, Jackson had fallen for the third time, and Dick was standing over his prostrate foe, with a bleeding nose, and an eye beginning to puff and blacken. "Has he had enough of it?" exclaimed Dick.

DICK LIGHTEART.

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG.

CHAPTER I.

THE TUTOR'S TROUBLES.

THE Reverend Septimus Lighthouse, Rector of Ingarstone, near Hayward's Heath, was very much in favor of educating children at home.

He did not like schools.

In his opinion, all that was bad and irreligious was picked up at school, by both boys and girls.

But, then, he had never been to school himself, which made a great difference.

He had been educated by a private tutor, and he determined that his children should not be exposed to the temptations of schools, but be privately instructed at home, as he had been.

At the age of thirty the Reverend Mr. Lighthouse had been inducted into a living worth a thousand a year by a rich relation.

He soon afterward married.

His wife was of an amiable disposition; kind and charitable, knowing as little of the world as did her husband.

In fact their world was comprised within the limits of their parish.

At the time our story opens they had five children.

Two girls and three boys.

The eldest boy, Richard, being nearly fifteen, Harold and Arthur, each a year younger, and the girls, Emily and Agnes, sixteen and seventeen respectively. Harold and Arthur were what is called very good boys, and Emily and Agnes were very good girls.

The boys had a tutor living in the rectory, named Mr. Smiles, while the girls had an elderly lady for a governess, whose name was Miss Bodmin.

Dick, however, was an exception; he did not submit to control as did his brothers and sisters.

He exercised an independent spirit, which all around him in vain endeavored to quell.

Frequently Mrs. Lighthouse would say to her husband, with tears in her eyes:

"Mark my words, Septimus, that boy Dick will be the scapegrace of the family."

"I don't recognize the necessity, my dear, for there being a scapegrace at all in the family," the parson would answer.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Lighthouse replied, "there is always a black sheep in every flock."

Mr. Lighthouse sighed, and wondered how it was that any boy of his could threaten to turn out badly after the careful education he was at the pains to give them at home.

Yet he would not yield to the solicitations of his friends and neighbors, and send the lad to school.

Mr. Smiles, the tutor, was the constant victim of Master Richard's jokes.

He, at least, would have been very glad to have seen him sent anywhere.

Once he suggested the propriety of selecting the sea as the proper profession for him.

"Our mercantile marine," he ventured to say, "offers splendid opportunities to spirited but wayward boys."

A severe frown from Mr. Lighthouse silenced him.

"No," said the clergyman; "the lawlessness and profanity of those who go down to the sea in ships is proverbial. No son of mine shall be a sailor. I intend Richard for the ministry. He shall be a clergyman like myself. Those escapades of his will wear off as he has more sense; and the wildness of youth will be followed by the refined wisdom of manhood."

Mr. Smiles hoped it might, but he did not say anything.

One morning, in summer, Mr. Lighthouse said to the tutor:

"You have not taken the boys out lately, Mr. Smiles, to explain to them the beauties of nature; do so to-day. I empower you to give them a half holiday. Go to the cook; see what cold provisions she can supply. Pack a basket, and picnic in the open air under the shade of some spreading beech-tree, as Virgil has it. Botanize, sir; explain to their young minds the nature and properties of trees and plants."

Mr. Smiles gladly agreed to the proposition, and the boys, no less pleased, set about making their preparations.

Nevertheless, there was an inward tremor about the heart of the tutor, for, as Dick had let him alone for a week or two, he thought it was about time for him to play him some trick or other.

After walking some distance, they selected a shady spot where they decided to dine.

There was a hedge and an oak tree, beneath whose aged boughs they spread their cloth.

Some cold lamb and a jar of cider, a salad, cream cheese and bread were an excellent repast.

"Observe this tree," said Mr. Smiles, pointing upwards. "It is one of the noblest specimens of forest grandeur. For centuries it may have braved the storm, and grown green in the sunshine. Our ships were made of oak, which is a wood of all the most durable. Let me apply history. King Charles II, once hid in an oak, and thus baffled his pursuers."

"Thank you, sir. Will you carve?" exclaimed Dick, who did not care much about this lecture on oak trees.

"I will, gladly; and you, Richard, say grace. But stay; where am I to sit?"

"Here, sir," answered Dick, indicating a particular spot.

Mr. Smiles, his face overflowing with satisfaction and good nature, accepted the position.

He was hungry.

The prospects before him were inviting.

Dick said grace, and Mr. Smiles began to carve.

Suddenly the knife fell from his hand, and he uttered a sharp cry of pain.

"Dear me! how unpleasant. A wasp!" he exclaimed.

"Did it sting you sir?" asked Dick, keeping some distance off.

"It did; and I declare here is another—and another; the place is alive with them; and—I am sitting upon a thistle, or—dreadful thought!—are these wasps beneath me?"

Scarcely had Mr. Smiles spoken than he essayed to rise, but he had hardly struggled a foot above the ground when he was constrained to sink down again.

His coat-tails were firmly fastened, by means of two split pieces of wood, to the ground.

A perfect swarm of wasps now surrounded him, and began to sting him in various places.

"Help! help!" he cried, wildly, plunging about, and beating the air with his hands.

He had sat down upon a wasps' nest, and the savage little insects were resenting his intrusion upon their domain.

When he partially arose, he liberated some of them, and they assisted in the attack.

By a desperate effort he got free, and, rushing to a small trout stream which flowed at the bottom of the field, he plunged his burning face and hands into the cold water.

"How odd that he should have sat on a wasps' nest," said Dick to his brothers.

"I believe you knew all about it, and I'll tell of you when we get home," replied Harold.

"Sneak away," retorted Dick; "and if you do, I'll give you a thrashing the next time I catch you out alone."

Harold held his tongue.

"Let us move these things. I object to wasps in connection with cold lamb and salad, and if Smiles has lost his appetite, there will be all the more for us to eat," continued Dick.

The things were quickly removed to another spot and spread under the shelter of a haystack which had been erected near the stream.

It had been partly cut, and Mr. Smiles was lying in considerable pain upon a ledge close to the water, and under the boughs of a sycamore.

He had been stung in six or seven different places.

Dick took him some dinner and a mug of cider.

The latter he drank, but he could not touch anything to eat, for a wasp had stung him inside his lip, which was much swollen.

"I am sorry for this, sir. Wasps are nasty things to meddle with. Shouldn't do it again if I were you, sir," said Dick.

"Go away; leave me," replied the tutor, who spoke with difficulty, owing to the injury to his lip.

Dick retired and joined his brothers, whom he assisted in demolishing the dinner.

"That's a very good tuck in," said Dick, drinking some cider. "Now, you two fellows, clear up the fragments, and put everything away in the basket."

Accustomed to obey their brother, Harold and Arthur did not refuse.

They knew that a refusal on their part might be attended with unpleasant consequences.

"I wonder if Smiles would give us a little more botany?" remarked Dick.

"I think he's gone to sleep," said Harold. "Do let him alone Dick. It must be so bad to be stung as he was."

"What could he expect when he went and sat down on their nest? I don't blame the wasps a bit. I say, if Smiles was suddenly startled which way would he jump?"

"Jump?" echoed Harold.

"Yes."

"Why into the river, of course. It's just before him. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing; never mind," replied Dick, who disappeared behind the sycamore tree.

In a few moments he was back again, busying himself in helping his brothers to wash the plates in the stream and pack up.

All at once Arthur exclaimed:

"Look at that smoke. Is the rick on fire?"

"Perhaps," answered Dick, coolly. "I have heard of such a thing as spontaneous combustion in hot weather."

"That's no reason why Mr. Smiles should be spontaneously combusted, or whatever you call it," replied Harold.

"He'll find it out presently," said Dick, who was evidently enjoying what he considered the fun.

Harold ran towards the rick, which was already smoking and burning in an alarming manner.

"Hi, sir! look out. The rick's on fire! Hi, hi!" he cried.

Mr. Smiles had sought a passing relief from the stings of the wasps in sleep, but the noise made by Harold effectually aroused him.

Looking behind him, he saw fire and smoke; before him was the shining stream.

His determination was taken in a moment.

With a terrified cry, he leaped into the water and sank like a stone.

When he came to the surface, being a good swimmer, he struck out and reached the shore without difficulty, landing, dripping with water, and presenting a pitiable spectacle.

Meanwhile, Dick, who had only set fire to some loose hay which he found lying about, proceeded to beat out the flames with a pole, and by dint of dragging the burning mass, by many a poke and shove, away from the rick, he soon extinguished it.

The most amiable of men would have lost his temper under these repeated annoyances.

Mr. Smiles was not naturally irritable, but he rushed upon Dick, and pulled his ear.

"That's one pull for the wasps, and another for the fire," he exclaimed, at each tug. "I'll tell your father you bad boy, and have you sent to sea."

"Shall you go too?" asked Dick, wriggling himself away, and standing out of reach.

"No; you will be entirely amongst strangers."

"Oh, I don't care so long as you are not one of the party," answered Dick, adding, "Good-bye."

"Where are you going to?" cried Mr. Smiles.

"I've had my dinner, and I'm going home. Besides, I should not like to be seen with you in your present state."

"You young rascal!" shouted Mr. Smiles. "Who is to carry the heavy basket and the cider bottle?"

"You must do it between you. I did my share in coming, and would not have shirked it going back if you'd been civil, and not pulled my ears. Perhaps you want to make them as long as your own."

Mr. Smiles was speechless with indignation.

Leaving the tutor and his brothers together to get home with the remains of the picnic as well as they could, Dick walked slowly along the bank of the stream, wishing that he had a line with him to tempt the speckled trout he saw leaping after the flies, and splashing in the sparkling water.

He had not gone more than half a mile, before he came upon an elderly gentleman, fast asleep under a tree.

His line was in the water, his rod rested upon a forked stick stuck in the ground.

He had evidently fallen asleep while fishing.

"The governor, by Jove!" exclaimed Dick, recognizing his father, who frequently stole an hour or two from his parochial duties to go and fish in the stream.

A can to put fish in, which contained two small perch, was near the rod.

"I'll have a lark with the governor now," said Dick, as he seized it.

Pulling up the line, he tied the can firmly to the hook, casting it into the stream again, when it instantly sank.

He then threw a stone at his father's gouty toes, which woke the old gentleman up.

Rubbing his eyes, he looked around him.

"Been to sleep," he murmured. "Heat of the sun, I suppose. What woke me? Strange pain in my right foot. Cramp, I suppose. Hullo! float under. Got a bite—big fish, I should imagine. Very careless to go to sleep—very."

Getting on his feet, he seized his rod and began to haul in the line, which he did with difficulty, owing to the weight at the end of it.

"Dear me; heavy fish," he said. "Wonder what it is. Something must have bolted the bait. It pulls like a twenty-pound pike. Gently; mustn't break the line. I'll play him a bit. Gently, gently."

He let go the line, and the can rolled down the shelving bottom just as if a fish was running away with it.

Then the old gentleman hauled in again, and again he played his big fish, thinking he was acting with consummate skill.

Thus half an hour passed, and he fancied he had exhausted the strength of his large capture.

With a desperate effort he pulled the can on the bank, and looked eagerly at it.

A groan burst from him, which was nearly followed by a naughty exclamation.

But he checked that.

"Some one has played me a trick while I slept!" he exclaimed. "I wish I knew who it was."

Dick, who had watched this with much amusement, could restrain his mirth no longer, and burst into a loud roar of laughter.

But he made off without being seen, although his father felt sure he recognized his voice, and put down his disappointment as usual to Master Dick.

These pranks were usually followed by a long lecture, for which the culprit cared very little.

The next day being Sunday, Mr. Lighthouse had carefully selected his sermon, which was printed and bound in a little book.

The text was taken from the Old Testament, and had reference to the sons of Anak, the argument being that if there were men in those days who were bodily gigantic, in the present age we outdid them in our mental attainments.

Seeing the sermon on his father's library table, Dick looked at it, and tearing out the front page, substituted for it a page of the history of Jack the Giant Killer.

The trick was not discovered, and the unsuspecting parson got into the pulpit, gave out the text with great solemnity, and proceeded:

"In the early days of the history of this island, there were many great and grim giants, who caused much misery to the people, and it was a great consolation to all when a deliverer arose in Cornwall who, from his prowess, was known as Jack the Giant Killer."

"Eh—what! What is this!" stammered the unhappy clergyman. "I fear, my friends, I have made a mistake."

Here he turned over a few leaves of the sermon.

All was hopeless confusion.

"Yes," he continued; "there will be no sermon this morning," and he proceeded to dismiss the congregation.

It soon got known that Master Dick had been at his tricks again, and many a good laugh was indulged in by the villagers at the rector's expense.

Mr. Lighthouse, however, was not to be pacified.

He had been made to look supremely ridiculous in the pulpit.

On Monday morning he said to his wife:

"I am going to walk over to Thorpe Hamlet, my dear."

"Who on earth are you going to see there?" asked Mrs. Lighthouse.

"Mr. Deacon, of the school. It's only a two mile walk, and Dick could go there every morning."

"But I thought you said"—

"That I disapproved of schools. Quite right. Yet, let me ask you, what are we to do with such a boy? There is Mr. Smiles laid up with a bad cold through his ducking, and his face not fit to be seen through wasp stings, and I the laughing-stock of the whole parish. The boys call me Jack the Giant Killer in the streets. It's a name that will stick to me all my life. I know they'll call me the Giant Killer or Old Jack, or something of that sort to the day of my death."

"Very well, dear. Go and see what you can do, I think I'd let him go a voyage; that might tame him," replied Mrs. Lighthouse.

"I don't like the sea. Sailors are desperately wicked. That shall be a last resource."

So Mr. Lighthouse walked over to Thorpe Hamlet, to see Mr. Deacon.

CHAPTER II.

FURTHER VEXATIONS.

Dick had long wished to pay off an old score he had against Miss Bodmin, his sister's governess, who, on one occasion, had detected him in the midst of one of his misdeeds, and straightway informed against him.

He disliked her, too, for the severe way in which she punished his favorite sister, Emily, keeping her in, time after time, and making her learn more geography in a month than she would ever have use for in a lifetime.

Getting hold of Emily, he said:

"I want you to imitate Miss Bodmin's handwriting, and write a letter to Mr. Smiles, asking him to meet her under the cedar tree on the lawn at dusk this evening. Say she has worked hard, and saved up some money, and Smiles might do worse than listen to the voice of affection. If you write this, Emmy, I'll imitate Smiles's hand, and entreat her to keep the same appointment, and when they're together, I'll go and tell mamma. It will be such fun, and they will look such fools."

"Capital!" exclaimed Emily. "Perhaps she'll have to leave."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"How glad I should be to get rid of old Bodmin," said Emily. "I'll write the note. You go and write yours, and come to me in half an hour."

The conspiracy prospered very well.

Mr. Smiles received a letter, which took him considerably by surprise, but he resolved to keep the appointment asked for, and see how much money the governess had saved.

Miss Bodmin, on her part, was ravished with delight at being asked to meet Mr. Smiles, who declared that he could no longer remain silent. If he did not give utterance to the promptings of love, his overcharged heart would break.

At dusk two figures stole out on the lawn, and disappeared in the shadow of the cedar tree.

They were Mr. Smiles and Miss Bodmin.

At the same moment, Dick, leading his mother, by

the hand, hid behind a laurel bush, where they could hear what passed.

"A very pretty flirtation," muttered Mrs. Lighthouse. "I must have been blind not to have seen what was going on. Nice people to be intrusted with the care and education of children."

"Dear Miss Bodmin," exclaimed Mr. Smiles, "how can I thank you for this proof of your esteem?"

"Is it possible," she murmured, softly, "that we can have lived so long in the same house without suspecting that we were dear to each other?"

"Ah, I have worked, but I have not saved," said the practical Smiles.

"Nor I." My slender stipend has gone to support an aged mother," answered Miss Bodmin.

"What, no money!" cried the astonished and mercenary tutor.

"Not a farthing; but I can work."

"This is a misrepresentation; but no matter, I am warned in time," continued Mr. Smiles.

"What is lucre to hearts that love? Oh, that letter of yours! I shall wear it ever next to my heart."

Mrs. Lighthouse rushed forward.

"I can bear no more of this," she cried. "The two simpletons!" adding:

"Miss Bodmin, I am ashamed of you; at your age you ought to know better. And as for you, Mr. Smiles, I can only say that this clandestine love-making is not in any way creditable to you."

"She wrote to me, ma'am," said Smiles.

"It's false! He wrote to me," said Miss Bodmin.

"I have her letter."

"I have his."

"You need not quarrel over the matter. Go to the house, if you please. I will speak to you, Miss Bodmin, in your own room," said Mrs. Lighthouse.

This ordered, they went away, and it was not for some hours that it was discovered how they had been hoaxed.

When all was explained, they had a hearty laugh, and Dick, as usual, came in for the abuse of all parties.

That evening the governess retired to rest early, to indulge in a good silent cry, as the best means of giving vent to her vexation.

Scarcely had she entered her room, when she beheld a shadowy figure enveloped in white garments, having great staring eyes as red as fire.

Uttering a series of shrieks, she fell forward insensible.

Her fall caused the apparition to tumble over.

It was a long pole enveloped in a sheet, with a hollow turnip for a head, in which burnt a piece of candle. The latter fell against the valence of the bed, which quickly took fire.

Fortunately her cries alarmed those below.

The Rev. Septimus Lighthouse, followed by Mr. Smiles, rushed into the room just in time to prevent a serious conflagration.

The water-jug and a blanket were brought into use, and the fire extinguished before it could do much mischief.

"Thank goodness we arrived upon the spot," said Mr. Smiles.

"It's that dreadful boy again. He'll do something desperate some of these fine days," said Mrs. Lighthouse, who busied herself in attending to the inanimate governess.

"He shall go away," said Mr. Lighthouse; "and this very night I will see what virtue there is in a sound caning."

"No," cried his wife; "we have always been opposed to corporal punishment. Try moral suasion."

"I have tried it," answered the parson, in a rage, "and what good has it done?"

"Sleep over it, dear. You should never correct a child while in a passion."

Mr. Lighthouse said nothing, but went into the room in which the boy slept.

Dick had just crept into bed, after enjoying the fruit of his practical joke, and pretended to be fast asleep.

"Get up," said his father, shaking him by the arm, and brandishing a riding-whip.

Dick trembled, but did not move, whereupon the parson turned down the clothes, and holding the boy down on his face, administered a castigation which made Dick bellow as lustily as a bull.

In a moment his mother was in the room, and snatched the whip from her husband's hand.

"You shall not do it," she exclaimed. "This violence is unmanly. Poor boy!"

"How do you expect him to respect me when there is this deplorable conflict of authority?" said the parson.

"He shall not be hurt," answered Mrs. Lighthouse, kissing her boy.

The clergyman retired to his study in a passion, and gave way to most unchristian-like reflections.

That last scene decided him, and the following day he walked over with Dick to Mr. Deacon's school at Thorpe Hamlet.

"Keep him all the week," he said, "and let him come home from Saturday to Monday, if he is good enough to deserve such an indulgence."

"He will soon improve under my parental rule," answered Mr. Deacon. "I have had many unruly and unmanageable boys, but I have contrived to tame them all."

"So much the better," replied Mr. Lighthouse.

And he retraced his steps, much pleased at having got rid of his constant tormentor.

During the remainder of that day, and the next, there was peace at the rectory.

"This is delightful," said Mrs. Lighthouse, after supper, on the evening of the second day.

"Yes," remarked Miss Bodmin, with a vindictive look. "One does not now go about in fear and trembling."

"He cut my bootlaces before he went," observed Mr. Smiles.

"I am inclined to believe that school is a good place for some boys, but not for all," said the parson.

At that moment the door opened, and in marched Dick.

"Hullo!" cried his father.

"You here, Richard?" said his mother.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Smiles and Miss Bodmin, in chorus.

"Good-evening. Glad the supper hasn't been cleared away, because I'm hungry," said Dick, sitting down and preparing to help himself to some cold beef.

His sisters looked frightened, and his brothers grinned.

Dick had told them he didn't mean to stop long at the Deacon's.

"If you have run away from your school, sir, you have made a mistake," exclaimed Mr. Lighthouse; "I will take you back again, and have you publicly punished, and made an example of."

"I didn't run away," answered Dick.

"What then, sir? Why are you here?"

"Because they wouldn't have me any longer," replied Dick, with his mouth full of bread and beef.

"You have been expelled, then?"

"I believe that's what they call it," said Dick, coolly.

"What did you do?" demanded his father.

"Nothing much."

"Tell me."

"Oh, I dare say you will hear all about it in the morning," Dick replied.

"I wish to know."

"I'm too tired to talk to-night; besides, no man is bound to criminate himself."

Neither threats or persuasions could induce Dick to tell his family anything that night.

So he was allowed to have his supper, and join in family prayers, after which he went to bed as usual with his brothers.

Loud laughter was heard in the dormitory for some time afterwards, and it was supposed that Dick was entertaining Harold and Arthur with an account of his adventures.

The Reverend Septimus Lighthouse, however, did not feel at all inclined to laugh.

He lay awake the best part of the night, wondering what his son's future would be, and having a presentiment that he would give him a great deal of trouble before he was much older.

CHAPTER III.

A SHORT STAY.

In his strong advocacy of home rule and home discipline, Mr. Lighthouse had forgotten that boys are too much with grown-up persons.

They become little men almost before they are boys, and this makes them self-opinionated, conceited and willful.

He began to see that he had made a mistake, and wished he knew how to remedy it.

It was not long before he heard from Mr. Deacon's own lips why Dick's stay had been so short at Thorpe Hamlet School.

From the first moment of his arrival Dick had exercised his ingenuity to discover in what way he could signify his dislike to the new control under which he was placed.

The master's desk was placed at a height of about four feet above the level of the school-room floor, and approached by six steps, like a throne.

While playing about in the room, Dick found a loose plank, and pulling it up, saw that the ground beneath the floor was nearly three feet deep, it having been excavated so far to prevent damp.

He knew that Mr. Deacon ascended his desk every morning at ten o'clock, and, standing up in a particular place, read prayers.

At once he conceived the idea of loosening the supports of the platform on which the master stood, in such a way that he should gradually sink, and fall into the hole which he knew to be underneath.

Accordingly, he got up in the night, went to the school-room with a lighted candle, a hammer, and a saw, and in an hour or two had cut away the boards, and arranged them in such a manner that he felt confident of the success of his scheme.

Mr. Deacon did not suspect anything.

He ascended to his desk, as usual, smiling blandly upon his pupils.

The usher advanced, and handed him an open Bible, according to custom.

Mr. Deacon took up his usual position in front of his desk.

Suddenly he began to disappear.

He grew gradually smaller and smaller.

With frantic efforts he clutched at his desk, but its surface was treacherous and slippery, and it afforded him no material support.

"Help! help!" he cried.

"My dear sir, where are you going?" asked the usher, in a tone of mild remonstrance.

Presently Mr. Deacon vanished from the scene altogether.

The usher ascended the steps, and peeped cautiously into the hole.

In the darkness below he was just able to discover his principal seated upon a heap of shavings.

The boys were about to leave their seats, when the usher, recovering his presence of mind, said:

"Sit where you are. Don't dare, one of you, to move."

Then he leaned over the hole and said:

"Below there, sir."

"Is that you, Mr. Jinks?" inquired Mr. Deacon, in a sepulchral voice.

"It is, sir. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

"I have fallen upon a tender part, and I am in pain," said the principal. "The boards must have been pur-

posely cut, or they would never have given way. I am poorly, Mr. Jinks, and I tell heavily. Tenpenny nails, with their points upwards and firmly imbedded in the hard earth, are not nice things to fall on, Mr. Jinks."

"Decidedly not, sir," answered the usher.

"Can you get a ladder?" inquired the hollow voice, like one risen from the dead and speaking from the tomb.

"A pair of steps can be easily procured."

"Procure them, then, if you please. I am anxious to be liberated from this thralldom."

Mr. Jinks went after a pair of steps, and in a short time Mr. Deacon was enabled to emerge from the dreary vault into which he had been precipitated in such an extraordinary and unexpected manner.

He was very dusty and hot, and looked flurried when he again made his appearance upon what remained sound of the dais.

A glance sufficed to show that a hole had been recently and designedly cut in the planking.

Occasionally he put one hand behind him, as if he was conscious of a painful sensation.

"Boys," he exclaimed, "one of you has been guilty of the commission of a diabolical outrage upon my person. I, your preceptor, am the victim of an infamous practical joke. It is a mercy, a providential mercy, that I did not break my limbs or dislocate my neck. I have had a narrow escape, but that is no reason why I should feel inclined to be merciful to the culprit. Now I appeal to this individual to give himself up, in order to save the remainder of you boys from condign punishment, for—mark me well—if I don't find out the offender, I will severely punish every boy in the school. Do you understand me?"

The schoolmaster paused and looked around him.

The boys whispered one to another, and seemed much puzzled.

"A boy who is wicked enough to invent such a pit-fall as that into which I have unhappily fallen is, I am convinced, too much of a coward to own his misdeed." Mr. Deacon continued.

At this Dick Lighthouse rose up in his place.

Every eye was fixed on him.

"I never was afraid to own my share in anything," he exclaimed, "and I fully admit that I did what you are complaining of."

"You, Lighthouse!" exclaimed Mr. Deacon.

"I, sir."

"Alone?"

"Quite alone."

"You have no accomplice?"

"None whatever," replied Dick.

"This takes me by surprise. I fear I shall have to expel you as an example to the boys; but I will do nothing hastily. Mr. Jinks, you will be good enough to conduct the business of the school this morning without me. I am too much shaken to do anything myself. I must retire to my study, and consult a physician. Before nightfall I will deliver my decision with regard to this misguided and vicious boy."

With this speech he withdrew, and Dick was left to his own reflections.

Mr. Deacon did not make his appearance again until the evening, when Dick was told that in the morning he would be ignominiously expelled with all the disgrace attendant upon the solemn ceremony of expulsion.

But Dick did not see why he should wait for that; and finding the door unlocked, quietly walked out, and appeared at the rectory, as we have related.

For some days his father preached to him, his mother talked to and entreated him, while Mr. Smiles and Miss Bodmin told him stories of celebrated criminals who all had been bad boys.

The end of it was that Mr. Lighthouse went to Brighton.

There he had an interview with Professor Simcox, of Harrow House, Kemp Town.

The gentleman had established a school on principles of his own.

He believed in corporal punishment amongst other things, and did not put faith in expulsion.

"I will make something of this scapegrace of yours, Mr. Lighthouse," he exclaimed; "and I shall be glad of the opportunity of testing my principles and method upon an unruly subject; but you must leave him entirely to me."

"Entirely," answered the parson.

"If I am compelled to whip him, you must not listen to his complaints, and if he escapes my vigilance and runs away, you must send him back again."

All which Mr. Lighthouse promised faithfully to do.

On his return to the rectory, the parson said to his wife:

"My dear, get Dick's box ready. I flatter myself I have found a school which will do for him, though I have to sacrifice all the principles upon which I have hitherto trained him."

"When does he go?" asked Mrs. Lighthouse, acknowledging to herself that it was impossible to keep him at home.

"When you like. Say to-morrow. I will accompany him myself."

The announcement being made to Dick, he smiled, and did not seem in the least alarmed at the prospect before him.

When he was asleep at night, Mrs. Lighthouse stole into the room, and kissed him tenderly, let a tear fall upon his face, murmuring:

"My poor boy, I will pray that you may meet with as much kindness among strangers as you have in your own home."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCHOOL AT KEMPTOWN.

It was difficult to know why Simcox called himself a professor.

Being a great believer in the art of telling a boy's character from the bumps on his head, perhaps he may be called a professor of phrenology.

Once his usher, Mr. Snarley, hit a boy on the head with a ruler.

Mr. Simcox passed by and said, "Come here, boy. It seems to me that you have a new bump of unusual development," and retired disgusted when he found it was the result of the ruler and not of nature.

Mr. Simcox was a little man; short, stout and fussy, appearing always in danger of apoplexy.

He had a great idea of his own importance, and was proud of his position of schoolmaster.

In early life he married his cook, an amiable but vulgar woman, who did not appreciate the letter H at its full value.

Her knowledge, however, of what ought to be done in the kitchen was of great use to the boys, who had to thank her for many a savory dish, and through her care and management they had plenty of good substantial food.

Mr. Simcox employed a master to come in and teach Latin and Greek twice a week.

He confined his efforts to preserving discipline and teaching English, while Mr. Snarley, the usher, attended to mathematics and managed the school generally, during study and recreation.

A tall, thin, spiteful-looking man was Mr. Snarley.

The boys dreaded as much as they hated him, for a more persistent tyrant never lived.

When Dick arrived, he found thirty boys inmates of the school at Kemp Town.

They all seemed cowed and crushed, wanting life and energy, which was one of the admirable results of Mr. Simcox's discipline.

"I shall have to wake them up a little," Dick thought.

There was only a few boys bigger than himself, and as he was naturally quick and had been well taught at home, he was put in the second class, the head of which was named Messiter.

After reading a lesson, the boys in each class were asked questions bearing upon it, and those who answered correctly were passed up over those who failed to do so.

On the second day of his stay at the school, Dick took the third place, only having Messiter and Fowler above him.

Mr. Simcox had been into his private room in the evening of the second day, and said, "Sit down, Lighthouse. Since your father left you here yesterday, I have heard a good report of you. That is right. You must retrieve your character during the time you are with me."

"I did not know that I had lost it, sir," said Dick. "Ah, well. We will not go into by-gones. What you did before you came here does not concern me, though I know more about you than you think I do, possibly. Remember that I am not to be trifled with. Go on as you have commenced, and you will return home at Christmas laden with prizes, bearing with you the commendation of your pastors and masters, as well as the esteem of your companions. Take this piece of cake and go and have your supper."

Dick thanked him and returned to the school-room, where the boys were preparing their lessons for the next day.

"Well," said Messiter, "what did he say?"

"Buttered me awfully," answered Dick, with his mouth full of cake.

Mr. Snarley, who was reading a novel borrowed from a circulating library, and had just become much interested in the details of a double suicide, looked up.

"No talking there," he exclaimed.

"Say it was Smiff," whispered Messiter.

Smiff was the nickname of a half silly boy, whose real name was Smith.

Owing to some impediment in his speech he called himself Smiff, and if a scapegoat was wanted for anything, the boys always declared that Smiff had done it.

In fact Smiff was to the school what the cat is to a lodging-house.

"Please, sir, it was Smiff," exclaimed Dick.

Mr. Snarley put down his book, and coming up to Dick, said, with a deep frown:

"Why do you tell me such a falsehood?"

Dick grew red in the face, and did not know what to answer.

Mr. Snarley repeated his question.

"I only did it in fun, sir," Dick said.

"Then that will teach you not to indulge in such doubtful fun again!" exclaimed Mr. Snarley, giving him a stinging box on the ear, which knocked him off the form on which he had been sitting on to the floor.

For a moment Dick was stupefied, but when he recovered, he rushed at Mr. Snarley, and kicked him violently on the shins.

"That will teach you not to hit me in that cowardly way again!" he cried.

It was the first time that he had ever been struck in such a manner.

"Why," he continued, "my father never did such a thing, and you shan't."

"Oh!" said Mr. Snarley, while the tears came into his eyes, "he has kicked me in a sore place, just where I fell down on the beach the other day. But I'll pay him out. Hold him tight, you boys in the first form; hold him for me!"

Such was the discipline amongst the boys at Harrow House that the six in the first form got up directly, and seizing Dick, held him down on the ground in spite of his struggles.

Mr. Snarley had lost no time in going to his desk, in which was a peculiar-looking garment of a yellow color. "This was a straight waistcoat."

Once Mr. Snarley had been a keeper in a lunatic asylum, and he had brought this instrument of torture away with him.

Professor Simcox approved of its use, and the boys knew what was coming the moment they saw Mr. Snarley go to his desk.

In a very short while Dick was helplessly clothed in this thing, which rendered him perfectly powerless, as he could not use his hands.

"You'll lick me again, will you?" asked the usher, boxing first one ear and then the other.

Dick was no sooner made by the blows to sway on one side than he was knocked up again on the other.

"I think you're a great coward," he gasped.

"Silence, sir, and beg my pardon!" exclaimed Mr. Snarley.

Much against his will, Dick was obliged to do so, when he was seated on a chair in the corner with his face to the wall, remaining there till supper time, when he was turned around to see the other boys eat, though allowed none himself.

He was glad when he got into his bed-room, for this sort of thing was so different to anything he had been accustomed to that he felt low and wretched.

Mr. Simcox was obliged to make up beds in the different rooms as best he could, and all the large rooms being occupied, he had put Dick in a double-bedded room on the ground floor with Messiter.

They were by themselves, and after Mr. Snarley had seen the candles put out, they did not fear any interruption.

To occupy the same bed-room together is always enough to make two boys friends.

It was very nearly the only chance of unrestrained conversation they had.

"I don't like this place," said Dick, when they were alone.

"Mind what you say," observed Messiter.

"Why?"

"Because Snarley has a way of listening."

"At the keyhole?"

"Yes. You don't know who is a spy and who isn't here."

"What must one do, then? Mayn't we talk?"

"It is safer to do so in whispers."

"I'll tell you what. I should run away if I wasn't afraid of being sent back," continued Dick, in a lower tone.

"You'll get used to it in time. I thought as you do, once, but I've got sly," replied Messiter.

"The way in which we're treated would make anyone sly. One can't even get out."

"Yes, you can."

"How?"

"I found out the dodge," said Messiter. "Write home and ask permission to learn gymnastics, and to use the swimming-bath at Brill's."

"Do you?"

"Yes; twice a week I go to Mohammed's gymnasium at Castle Square, and three times a week to bathe at Brill's."

"Do all the fellows do it?"

"No. Only about a dozen, and as Snarley can't leave the school, we go together. If we are back at our time, it is all right. We do have a spree sometimes; we can go into the shops and buy what we like. It's—what shall I say?—a gleam of sunshine in a coalhole."

"I'll write to-morrow. Thank you for the hint."

"It's no use being cocky here," Messiter went on. "The professor prides himself upon our obedience. Be sly, and you'll get on."

"Yes. That's all very well; but I have always been taught to be straight-forward and open," replied Dick.

"Won't do. It's a mistake. Pretend to be good and quiet."

"I'll make that beast Snarley sorry for what he did to-night before long," said Dick, rather vindictively.

Mr. Snarley pretended to be very fond of Dick after this affair, and let him off with little punishments occasionally; but Dick was not easily deceived.

Messiter whispered to him:

"You look out for squalls, now Snarley's shamming kind."

"Dry up," answered Dick, with a significant smile.

"You needn't teach your grandmother to suck eggs. He won't get a rise out of me."

The usher tried his hardest to be kind.

Taking Dick out for a walk with him, he led him into a pastry cook's, and pointing to the counter, which was covered with all sorts of delicious jam and pastry preparations, said:

"Have what you like, Lighthouse."

"Thank you, sir," replied Dick.

In a few minutes, he had eaten about ten twopenny raspberry and cream tartlets.

"You see I am not such a bad fellow, Lighthouse," continued the usher. "It is only my position that makes me appear harsh."

"Yes, sir," answered Dick, with mouth full.

"Boys must be kept in order. It would not do to let them return to their parents like young savages, would it?"

"No, sir."

Dick now began his fifth cheese-cake.

"But come, boy, let us return home."

"There's two and six to pay, sir," exclaimed the shopkeeper.

Mr. Snarley paid it, not without a groan, murmuring:

"There's two and sixpence out of my hard-earned salary gone into his maw. I do hope he will have a pain after it."

After that the usher gave up being kind to Dick, as the part of Judas Iscariot was difficult to play and produced no result.

Mr. Lighthouse promptly accorded Dick permission to learn swimming and gymnastics, so that he was able to accompany Messiter and the other boys.

"It will be jolly to be all by oneself," remarked Dick to one of his friends.

"Will it?" exclaimed Mr. Snarley, who happened to

overhear the observation. "I shall go with you. Boys ought not to be left to themselves."

Much to Dick's annoyance, Mr. Snarley went with them to Brill's and stood on the side while the boys were bathing.

Dick played about in the water for some time, and suddenly began to splash and kick.

He covered Mr. Snarley with water, and making a dash at his legs, succeeded in pulling him into the bath.

The unfortunate usher fell in head first, and was nearly half a minute before he came up, spluttering and half suffocated.

His hat floated gayly on the surface until a boy carried it under and tore it to pieces.

"You young rascal!" cried Mr. Snarley, whose voice was drowned in the roar of laughter that came from all sides of the bath.

He presented a most ludicrous appearance as he stood dripping like a waterfall, and shaking his fist at Dick.

"I don't know what came over me, sir. I thought I was drowning," said Dick.

"I'll drown you, you vagabond!" exclaimed the usher.

"I'm the son of a gentleman," answered Dick, "and I'll write home to my father if you call me names."

"Very well, my young gentleman, it will be my turn next."

"Hadn't you better go home, sir! You might catch cold," said Dick.

Mr. Snarley shook with rage.

"I'm well again now, sir, don't stop on my account. It was only a passing fit, or something of that sort. Have a cab, sir?"

All this time Dick kept at a respectable distance from the usher, who would certainly have beaten him had he been able to reach him.

Presently he left the swimming-bath to go home and change his clothes.

The boys crowded around Dick and applauded him for what he had done.

"I couldn't help it. He looked so tempting," said Dick.

"He'll never forgive you for it, or for chaffing him," exclaimed Fowler.

"I vote we all have fits like Lighthouse; and he won't be so fond of coming with us wherever we go," said Messiter.

"I'll have him again before long," remarked Dick, quietly.

As they walked home they passed a shop where birds and other live stock were sold.

"Hold hard," said Dick, to Messiter. "I'm going to buy something."

He went into the shop and was gone about a minute. When he rejoined Messiter, his handkerchief was hanging out of his pocket.

"What have you got?" asked Messiter.

"Wait a bit and you'll see. It's something for Snarley," answered Dick, with a merry twinkle in his eyes. There was an hour's school before dinner, and Dick took his accustomed place.

Mr. Snarley had changed his clothes, and looked very pale.

Dick cracked a nut.

"Will you have some?" he exclaimed, addressing his nearest classmate.

Mr. Snarley heard the crack, and advanced at the double.

"Who's eating in school?" said he.

No one answered.

"It's you, Lighthouse. You're eating nuts," continued the usher, with the air of a man who says to himself, "Now I've got him."

"No, sir; I'm not," replied Dick.

"How dare you say so, when I see shells in your hands?"

"It was only one nut, sir, and that's not nuts," Dick exclaimed.

"That is a quibble. I believe you've got a pocket full. Look at your right hand trousers pocket. It is distended with something. Empty it this instant. I shall report you to Mr. Simcox."

"What for?"

"You'll see what for. Empty your pocket."

"I'd rather not, sir."

"Why?"

"I'm afraid."

All the boys began to titter, except those who were too much alarmed lest they should be noticed.

But every one was pleased.

Dick was beginning to wake them up, as he said he would.

"Do as I tell you," exclaimed Mr. Snarley.

"You may, sir, if you like."

"Very well; stand up. Why, your pocket is bloated with nuts, as I suspected."

"Take care, sir," said Dick.

"Of what?"

"Mind he doesn't bite."

"Bite! what nonsense. Do you think I am to be made a butt of by you? Do you want to be considered the privileged buffoon of the school? If you do, you will have to pay dearly for it. I can tell you, if you make your jokes at my expense."

Dick turned his left side to Mr. Snarley, who pulled out the handkerchief.

Then he plunged his hand in.

Expectation was at its height.

Suddenly, and with a sharp cry of pain, he withdrew his hand, which was dripping with blood.

"You've done this on purpose! You put a live thing in your pocket!" he exclaimed, furiously.

"I told you to mind it did not bite, sir," said Dick, "and I did not know it was against the rules of the school to keep animals. If I like to put a pet in my pocket, that is my lookout."

Mr. Snarley could not deny to himself that he was in the wrong.

"Very well; we shall see. What animal is it?" he said.

"Only a ferret, sir."

"A ferret!"

"There are rats in my bedroom. I heard one outside the door near the keyhole the other night."

Messiter was here seized with such a violent fit of coughing that some one had to slap him on the back to prevent him from choking.

"Go out into the yard and put the creature in some place of safety," exclaimed Mr. Snarley.

Dick departed, and the usher, binding some plaster around his injured finger, went on with the morning's work.

In the evening Mr. Snarley often enjoyed the luxury of a cigar with the professor.

During these hours of idleness they compared notes, and talked over the business of the school.

"I wish," the usher said, "that we could do something to check the mischievous propensities of that new boy, Lighthouse."

"What has he done?" asked the professor.

Mr. Snarley told him, concluding:

"He tried to drown me at Brill's, and I have a strong suspicion that he bought that ferret to bite me."

"For neither of which things can I justly punish him."

"I don't say you can, sir; but it is hard for me to have to put up with it."

"So it is. You'll catch him tripping before long, and I will cane him within an inch of his life. I had his character from his father," said Mr. Simcox.

"Some boys don't care for caning," remarked Mr. Snarley.

"They may pretend they don't; but in my opinion the effects of a caning are more lasting than those of the birch. A good caning must make itself felt for days afterwards, and if it does not affect him, we will put him in our black hole on bread and water for twenty-four hours. We've tamed a few unruly spirits by that means, Snarley."

"Yes, sir, we have, and that will be the thing for this Lighthouse."

All at once a shower of sparks came into the room through the keyhole, amidst a great fizzing and smoke.

"Good heaven! what's that?" cried Mr. Simcox.

"Some one's stuck a lighted squib in the keyhole," answered Mr. Snarley, darting out.

At the end of the passage he heard a scuffling.

In a moment he was lending his valuable aid to Mrs. Simcox, who had hold of a boy in his night-shirt.

"Who is it, ma'am?" cried Mr. Snarley.

"I don't know. The young Turk knocked the candle out of my hand, but I collared 'old of him, thinking he was up to some mischief."

"Quite right, ma'am. It is lucky you were coming this way. Give him to me."

The usher gripped hold of the lad tightly, and dragged him to the light.

"Don't scuff him too 'ard," said Mrs. Simcox.

"Never fear, ma'am."

He took him to the study, followed by Mrs. Simcox.

"Have you got him?" asked the professor.

"Fast, sir."

"That's right; let's have a look at him. Who is he?"

Mr. Snarley flung the boy's face around full to the gaslight.

"Lighthouse," exclaimed Mr. Simcox.

It was Dick, who was caught at last.

CHAPTER V.

CAUGHT AT LAST.

"So, sir, it is you, is it?" exclaimed Mr. Simcox, regarding Dick with a stern look, not unmixed with triumph.

"I thought as much," remarked Mr. Snarley, whose face glowed with pleasure.

He would rather that Dick should have been captured than any other boy in the school.

"I'm in for it," thought Dick. "I shall catch it; but there's one comfort, they can't kill me."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Simcox: "who'd ha' thought it? Hif I'd been asked, I should 'ave said that Lighthouse 'adn't got it in 'im."

"Not got it in him!" repeated the professor, indignantly. "Why, he's the very imp of mischief himself. It's his character. We had it with him from his own father. He's one of the unruly ones, and was sent here to be tamed."

"I'm sure I don't like to see a boy beat," replied Mrs. Simcox. "But hif that's 'is character, and such 'is 'is wicked nature, why, I must be one of the first to say, give 'im all 'e deserves. Fancy putting fireworks through the keyhole! Himp's just the word for 'im. I'd himp 'im."

"Leave him to me, my dear. Are you master of this school, or am I?" exclaimed the professor, who did not like his wife's interference.

"Hoh!" cried Mrs. Simcox, who was not in a yielding mood, "hif I'm to 'ave my nose snapped hof in that way, I'd better go."

"Go, madam, at your pleasure," answered the professor.

Mrs. Simcox sank into a chair and put her feet firmly on the floor, as if she meant to intimate that she had taken root, and nothing but brute force should move her.

Taking no further notice of her, the professor pulled one of Dick's ears so severely that he winced under the pain.

"What do you mean, sir, by such behavior?" exclaimed the professor. "Do you think it is seemly to dare to put fireworks in your master's keyhole?"

"Only a squib, sir," said Dick, humbly.

"Only a squib! Do you know that people have had their eyes put out with squibs?"

"Indeed, sir!" said Dick, as if he was highly interested in this important fact.

"My wife, with the rashness of her sex, has urged me to punish you, and you deserve punishment."

"Yes, sir," replied Dick, trembling in his shirt.

"I am glad to see you penitent. Where there is shame there may be reformation. You may have heard that I am severe, but I know how to temper justice with mercy. It depends upon yourself entirely whether you become acquainted with the means I have at my disposal for conquering bad boys. At present you shall not say that I have erred on the side of severity. This is your first fault."

"Not exactly, sir," said Mr. Snarley, who saw the offender slipping from his grasp.

"Do not interrupt me, if you please, Mr. Snarley. I believe I am master here."

The professor looked around with the air of a king.

No one contradicted him.

"Very well," he continued. "I say it is the first fault of this boy which has come directly under my notice, and I shall let him off with a warning."

A groan of intense disappointment broke from the usher.

"Did you speak?" asked the professor.

"No, sir," answered Mr. Snarley.

"Very good. Lighthouse, you will return to your dormitory, and thank your lucky stars that you have escaped a deserved caning; another time you will not find me so merciful. Let this be a warning to you. No more pranks in this house, or you'll regret it."

He released his hold of Dick's ear, and that young gentleman ran away congratulating himself upon the "close shave" he had had.

Messiter had been waiting for his return in the greatest anxiety.

"Did they nail you?" he asked.

"Yes. But the governor was in good humor, and I got off, as it was my first fault."

"That's spiffing," said Messiter. "I thought you were in for a good leathering, and I expected ever, moment to hear your sweet voice crying out, 'Oh! please don't, sir. No more, sir. I won't do it again, sir. Let me off this time, sir. Oh, sir—oh, don't, please, don't!'"

"Thank you," said Dick, dryly. "You seem to know all about it."

"I've had a taste of it in my time," answered Messiter, "and I find that the more you holler, the more they lamm into you."

"I should sing out as if they were murdering me," replied Dick, "and I think they would leave off to get rid of my noise."

"You'll have a chance of trying the experiment before long, if you keep on as you have begun," replied Messiter, with a grin.

"All right, we shall see by-and-by. I'm off to sleep," Dick said, turning over on his pillow.

In five minutes the boys were asleep, such is the elasticity of youthful nature.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT IN THE FIELDS.

THE quarter glided on, and for a wonder Dick Lighthouse kept out of mischief.

Perhaps his busy brain was plotting something new, but at any rate he showed no sign of it.

"See the effect of my discipline," said Mr. Simcox. "I am positive that, when a boy is not hardened, more may be done by kindness and persuasion than by flogging."

Mr. Snarley shook his head, as if he did not quite agree with the professor.

The boys used to play in the meadow at the back of the house, in Kemp Town, which was tolerably large, and occupied by three or four schools, who all paid a small sum for the privilege, each using a corner.

In the autumn hockey, or football, were the games in vogue.

The Harrow House boys played hockey sometimes and at others football, preferring hockey, for which they had long stout sticks, with curved handles.

Mr. Snarley did not often join the boys in their sports.

There was nothing congenial between him and them.

While they played he usually read a book or indulged in a pipe in some quiet corner.

One day the Harrow House boys went as usual to the field to play at hockey.

Mr. Snarley condescended to play with them for a short time, but Dick contrived to hit him on the shins with his stick and send him away limping, begging his pardon loudly, and protesting that it was the purest accident in the world, when all the time he had done it on purpose.

"Getting tired of the game?" Dick said to Messiter, who was his invariable companion. "Let's stroll about. I've had enough of this."

"So have I," replied Messiter.

"I can see Rumcovey over there selling things to Ginx's," continued Dick.

"So can I. Have you any tin?" We'll have some tarts."

"I've got a bob," answered Dick.

They walked towards another part of the field where the Reverend Mr. Ginx's boys, a rival school in the neighborhood, were playing.

Rumcovey was a Jew, who carried about with him a tin case with a door to it, and three shelves inside, on which rested some very decent pastry.

And this he sold to the different schoolboys whom he found playing, or stood on the Parade and took his chance of custom.

He was tall and thin, and sallow as to his complexion, and had corkscrew ringlets very highly greased, and

spoke with the peculiar intonation of the sons of Israel.

When then came up to him, Dick said:

"I say, our tutor wants some jam tarts. He's taken rather bad, and you're to go to him with sixpenn'orth. Leave your tin here."

"Yes, mayoung shentleman," answered Levey Rumcovey; "yes, ma goot poy, but who ish to mind it?"

"I will. You know me," answered Dick.

"Vell, I don't like to keep a shentleman a-waitin' and I don't see vat harm you can do, ma poy, as I lock up my little tin of cakesh. So I vill go to your usher, and take sixpenn'orth wid me."

Accordingly Rumcovey took out some tarts and locked up his tin case, which he placed on the ground.

Dick pointed out a part of the field in which he knew Mr. Snarley was lying down, and the Jew set off at a run.

"I think I have got a key that will open that lock," said Dick.

"Have you?" exclaimed Messiter, delighted. "Now then for a lark."

Dick took out a small bunch of keys which he happened to have in his pocket, and tried the lock.

After one or two attempts the key turned in the lock.

"Hurrah!" he said.

"Does it fit?" asked Messiter.

"Beautifully."

The door came open.

"I say you are a fellow," cried Messiter, lost in admiration.

"Tuck in and look sharp," said Dick, himself setting the example.

Levey Rumcovey happened to have done a good business that day, and there were not more than a couple of dozen tartlets in his case.

These, as a matter of course, quickly disappeared before the united exertions of the boys.

"Now fill it up with stones," said Dick.

Messiter took the hint, and shortly the shelves were lined with stones picked up from the field.

Presently the Jew came back, looking very irate.

"The shentleman did not vant any tarts. You shall not play me any more tricks, ma poy!" he said.

Just at this moment Ginx's boys left off playing and crowded round the pieman, some to buy his pastry, and others to drink the ginger beer which he carried in a basket.

"Plenty of tarts to-day, sir," Rumcovey answered an intending customer. "Everything of the very besht."

He unlocked his case, and drew out first one tin and then another.

"Why 'help me never!" he cried in dismay. "Vat is tish? My tarts have turned into stonesh!"

"It's Simcox's boys," exclaimed the captain of Ginx's; "I saw two of them here just now. Where are they? Pound 'into them. Give it them, the brutes. We'll teach them to steal your tarts, Levey."

Dick and Messiter were standing by, enjoying the effects of the joke.

It was too late to run, and, putting a good face on the matter, Dick went up to the pieman, and said:

"I did take your tarts. What are they worth? I am willing to pay for them."

"Ah!" replied Rumcovey, "I always shaid that Mr. Shimcox's boys were the shoal of honor. Give me five shillingsh, sir, and we'll cry a go. They're worth more, but I'll take that."

It was nearly all the money Dick had with him, but he freely gave it to the Jew, considering that he really owed him.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked.

Levey Rumcovey expressed himself highly so.

Then Dick turned around to Jackson, the captain of Ginx's, and said:

"I think you spoke to me just now."

"Well, what then?" answered the captain of Ginx's.

"You said something about stealing."

"So it was stealing."

"Do you feel inclined to apologize?"

"Certainly not," answered Jackson, in a decided tone.

"Oh! you don't? Take that then."

As he spoke, Dick hit him straight from the shoulder.

Jackson sprang back, and the blow grazed his forehead.

In an instant they were at it hammer and tongs, Jackson having the advantage in being older and taller, but Dick was heavier, and his muscular frame made him look as if he could last.

Messiter was much alarmed.

He did not see the first blow struck, and his impression was that Dick was being ill-treated by the whole of Ginx's.

Thinking that he would best serve his friend by apprising Simcox's boys of what was taking place, he started off for that purpose, knowing his single arm would be of little use against thirty or more opponents.

Simcox's hated Ginx's.

There was a feud of long standing between them, and it was reported that the last time they encountered one another in battle array, Simcox's got the worst of it, so that many of the Simcoxians burned for revenge, which the Ginxites were not at all slow to allow them to try to take.

"I say, you fellows," exclaimed Messiter, arriving out of breath, "Ginx's are half killing Lighthouse."

"Are they?" said Fowler. "Let us rescue him."

"Rescue! rescue!" cried a dozen boys, in a breath.

As if with one accord, they ran quickly, sticks in hand, to the other part of the field, just as in days of old the stalwart shop boys of London answered to the cry of "Prentices! prentices! Club, clubs!"

In the meantime, the fight had gone in Dick's favor.

Jackson had been knocked down twice, and to do

Ginx's boys justice, they had made a ring, and looked on to see fair play.

Just as Fowler and the others arrived, Jackson had fallen for the third time, and Dick was standing over his prostrate foe, with a bleeding nose, and an eye beginning to puff and blacken.

"Has he had enough of it?" exclaimed Dick.

"If he can't come to time, I'm game to fight the lot of you, one down and the other come on."

"Now, then," suddenly cried Fowler, in the rear. "Go in and win, lads. Give it to the cowardly brutes hot and strong."

"Wire in, wire in," said Messiter, dealing one of Ginx's a blow on the back of the head with his hockey stick, which sent him sprawling.

Directly all was confusion.

The Ginxites defended themselves as well as they could, and a small Donnybrook Fair commenced.

"There darlint. Just taste this sprig of shillelagh," said O'Shaughnessy, an Irish boy at Simcox's. "By the powers, and we'll see which is thickest, your head or a yard of good blackthorn."

The fight waged furiously for some time, but the Ginxites, taken by surprise, were no match for their opponents, who in about five minutes drove them in an ignominious rout from the field, carrying with them some broken heads, and leaving their badly wounded on the ground.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Fowler, "we've licked them. That will teach them to ill-treat one of our fellows again."

Mr. Snarley had arrived on the scene of action, and was much scandalized by what had taken place.

He was met by Ginx's usher, a Mr. Cooper, who said: "What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene, sir?"

"Just what I was about to ask you, sir," answered Snarley.

"Do you see how my boys have been treated?"

"I have seen nothing."

"But I have."

"Why didn't you stop it, then?" said Snarley, with a sneer.

"Because I couldn't, unaided. We were set upon by a gang of ruffians."

"Ruffians in your teeth, sir. I can fight, sir; come on," said Mr. Snarley, growing valiant, doubling his fists, and turning up his coat cuffs.

"I do not fight, sir," answered the rival usher, with dignity. "I am not a blackguard."

And turning on his heels, he beat a retreat after his boys, leaving Snarley the master of the field.

Never had Snarley behaved in a manner more calculated to raise him in the esteem of the boys under his control.

They declared that he was a brick, and that he possessed qualities of which they had hitherto been ignorant.

All were loud in his praise as they returned to the school, the play hour being now over.

No notice was taken of Dick's black eye, which was discreetly overlooked.

He was the hero of this adventure, which raised all the Simcoxians very much in their own estimation, and also in that of their antagonists, who in future gave them a wide berth.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BRANDY-BALL MAN.

EVERY boy who has been at school in Brighton knows the brandy-ball man.

That eccentric-looking personage, with a velvet cap and a long tassel, carrying, slung over his shoulders by a strap, a tray containing sweets of a round shape, supposed to be mysteriously concocted of sugar and brandy.

Who can forget his wonderful corkscrew ringlets, and the peculiar intonation of voice with which he sang:

"Come, buy my fine brandy-balls;
To young and old,
They're hourly sold,
Are these fine brandy-balls.
Come in a trice;
They are so nice—
So nice—
And buy my brandy-balls."

One evening Dick had been indulging in this enticing refrain, and he said to Messiter:

"I wonder if we could give Snarley the slip, and get out to buy some brandy-balls."

The boldness of this proposition almost took Messiter's breath away.

"Get out!" he repeated.

"Yes. Why not?"

"Such a thing has never been heard of at Simcox's since it was a school."

"All the more reason why it should be done."

The boys were in the school-room, getting up their lessons for the next day.

Mr. Snarley was nodding over a book at the upper end of the room.

Again was heard the refrain:

"Buy my fine brandy-balls."

"I must have some of them, or else I shan't sleep," continued Dick.

"I should like some," said Messiter, wistfully.

"Are you game to come with me?" asked Dick.

"Ye-es," said Messiter, half afraid.

"All right. I'll slip out first, and wait for you in the passage. We can get out of the front door, and I dare say one of the servants will let us in the area."

"The cook's a stunner; she won't split."

"That will do, then. If I can once get out, I have no doubt I can go in again. Come quietly, and Snarley will not be any the wiser."

Messiter nodded.

Dick got up, and managed to leave the room without attracting attention.

Then he stood in the passage with a beating heart, waiting for his companion.

Presently Messiter joined him.

"Quick," said Dick, under his breath.

At this moment Mr. Snarley looked up.

"Who is that just gone out of the room?" he asked.

"Messiter, sir," said some one.

"And Lightheart, sir," said another boy.

"Oh!" remarked Mr. Snarley, scenting the mischief afar off.

He arose from his seat, put down his book, and went out of the room.

As he reached the passage he heard the street door slam.

"Hullo!" he muttered, "can those boys have gone out?"

Taking down his hat, which hung on a peg, he went into the street.

Under a lamp were two boys talking to the brandy-ball man, who was serving them with his wares.

"My boys," said Mr. Snarley. "Here, I say, what is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed, in a louder tone.

Dick heard him.

"Run," he whispered to Messiter. "Snarley's twigg'd us. Cut along."

"Where to?" inquired Messiter.

"Follow me."

Dick ran along the Parade, closely followed by Messiter, and Mr. Snarley scudded along after them in full chase.

After going some distance, they came to a flight of steps leading to the beach.

"This way," said Dick, hurriedly. "It is dark on the beach, and we shall fog him there."

They darted down the steps at the imminent risk of their necks, but the usher was after them; and as his legs were the longest, he was rapidly gaining on them.

The stars were out and it was a fine night, but there was no moon.

The tide was just on the turn, and the waves plashed mournfully on the beach, retreating with a sullen roar.

"Stop, stop! It will be better for you," cried Snarley. The boys paid no heed to his admonition.

"I know who you are," he continued, "you, Lightheart, and you, Messiter, do you hear me?"

It was difficult to run on the shifting shingle, and Messiter, slipping down, sprained his ankle slightly.

"I can't run any more," he said.

"Why can't you?" asked Dick.

"I've hurt my foot."

"I won't be caught. Blow that beast, Snarley. We should have been in again, and at our desks all right by this time, if it had not been for him," Dick said, with determination.

"Here's a boat. Suppose we get into it?" Messiter suggested.

"Jump in," answered Dick.

Messiter did so.

The beach here was of a shelving nature, and taking advantage of this formation, Dick, exerting all his strength, pushed the boat down.

It fell at once into deep water and floated.

Giving it one more push, Dick sprang in and sank down in the bottom, where Messiter was already reclining.

Mr. Snarley looked here and there, and was considerably puzzled.

"They were close to me a minute ago," he muttered.

"Where on earth can they have got to?"

It never occurred to him that they were in the boat.

"Perhaps they are hiding behind the bathing machines," he muttered again.

Acting upon this idea, he went to a row of machines drawn up on the beach, and carefully ransacked their interiors, looking inside, outside, and under the wheels, consuming more than a quarter of an hour in this agreeable pastime, without, of course, making any discovery.

"They've given me the double and gone home, I should think, hoping to get in before me," he said.

Giving up the search as a bad job, he returned home in the worst of tempers.

"I'll have their jackets dusted for them," he went on, savagely.

Mr. Simcox was apprised of what had taken place, and a strict search was made throughout the house for the two runaways.

It was supposed that they would return when they fancied all were asleep, and attempt to get in at some window at the back of the house.

Their absence created no real alarm.

While preparations were being made for their reception, and the punishment to be given them was talked about, the boys were laughing at their escape.

For nearly six minutes they lay immovable at the bottom of the boat.

They thought that Mr. Snarley might see them if they showed a head.

"Have a brandy-ball?" said Dick.

"Have you got some? I hadn't time to take mine, though I paid old Brandy-balls for them," answered Messiter.

Dick gave him one.

"He's gone by this time," said Messiter; "at least I should think so. Take a squint around."

Dick did so.

"By jingo!" he said with a whistle.

"What is it?" asked Messiter.

"We've left the land," answered Dick.

"Left the land!" repeated Messiter in dismay.

"Yes, and a good way, too, behind us. Look at the lights of the town, and the chain pier lights. We seem to have got away from that."

It was true.

The tide was going out, and it had drawn the boat with it.

"Oh! what shall we do?" said Messiter, inclined to cry.

"Have a brandy-ball," said Dick, coolly.

"Ain't you a funk?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I never am," Dick replied, with a laugh.

"You are the coolest fish I ever saw; but perhaps there are oars in the boat, and we can pull her in."

"A good idea."

Dick looked carefully all over the boat, but to his consternation, there was nothing in the shape of an oar to be seen.

"Sold again," he said.

The owner of the boat had withdrawn the oars when he beached her.

"Here's a go!" exclaimed Messiter. "What is to become of us?"

"We shall have an opportunity of enjoying a life on the ocean wave, as the song says."

"Oh, do be serious."

"Shall I sing you 'I'm afloat'?" asked Dick.

"Oh, no. How can you think of singing when we are in such a mess?"

"You won't have a song? Try a brandy-ball then," replied the imperturbable Dick.

His countenance was a trifle graver, however, although he would not allow his companion to see it.

"What a fellow you are! We may be all drowned, I tell you! Oh, I wish I hadn't come! I'd give anything to be at school again!" groaned Messiter.

"And get wolloped by Simcox? Thank you? Not for me!—not much!—next week! I'd rather be where I am, ever so much!" answered Dick.

"But think of being drowned."

"That's better than being hanged. It's an easy way of going out of the world."

Messiter was silent.

"I call this lovely," exclaimed Dick. "Look at the beautiful stars, and the sky, and the lights of the town, and see the waves sparkling. It's awfully jolly. If I could smoke, I think I should enjoy a cigar."

"If the beastly boat goes on rolling like this, I shall be sick," said Messiter.

"Try a brandy-ball," replied Dick.

"Hang your brandy-balls! Oh, I do feel so bad."

"If you won't, I will. These brandy-balls are not to be sneezed at. But a little brandy without the balls is the thing for a sea voyage."

As he spoke he ate a brandy-ball, crunching it between his teeth instead of sucking it leisurely, which was a sign that he was not at his ease.

In spite of his levity he knew that the boat was drifting out to sea.

And this, at ten o'clock, on a not particularly bright night, was anything but a cheering prospect.

CHAPTER VIII.

DRIVEN OUT TO SEA.

A STIFF breeze was blowing from the shore, and, without the aid of oars, it was clearly impossible for the boys to regain the land.

Messiter was much alarmed.

He had not the natural courage of his companion, and had never studied to require the self-reliance that always stood Dick in good stead.

Lying at the bottom of the boat, he did nothing but cry.

"Come, I say," exclaimed Dick, cheerfully, "don't blub. What's the use of blubbing?"

"I can't help it," sobbed Messiter.

"Suppose you cry all night—will that bring us back again?"

"No, no!"

"Shut up then. If it wasn't dark, I should call it a good spree."

"We've nothing to eat."

"I've got one brandy-ball left," replied Dick.

"You always laugh at these things. I wish I were like you," answered Messiter.

"Pull yourself together. Perhaps we shall be picked up by some passing ship."

"And taken to Australia."

"Not likely."

"Or cut to pieces by a steamer."

"That's more probable," answered Dick. "But we must take watch and watch, as the sailors say, and keep a good lookout. I'm going to make the best of it. There ought to be a rudder on board. I shall look for it, and ship it."

A few minutes' search showed him what he was looking for, and without much difficulty he attached the rudder to the stern of the boat.

"Can you steer?" asked Messiter.

"Rather. We had a little sailing-boat on a lake near the governor's house, and I often used to go out in her. One winter she got swamped, and leaked so ever afterwards that we were obliged to turn her up. It's very easy. If you want to go right, you pull the right string; if left, pull the left, unless you have the ropes crossed, and then it's vice versa."

"What is to become of us?" moaned Messiter.

"You are a milksop," said Dick, almost angrily. "We shan't come to much grief, for with the rudder I can keep her head to the wind, and prevent the waves breaking over us, as they seemed inclined to just now. If you were a girl, you couldn't funk more than you do."

"I'll try to be brave. Tell me what to do."

"Catch hold of the tiller. We have no ropes. This piece of wood, I mean. I want to explore the ship. There ought to be a sail somewhere. Here's the mast."

As he spoke he handed the tiller to Messiter, telling him to hold it in a particular way, and seizing the mast, stepped it in the place appointed for it.

In the bows of the boat was a locker, and this he proceeded to open by unfastening the button which kept the door fast.

"Hurrah!" he exclaimed; "here's the sail!"

"What's the good of it?" asked Messiter.

"It will enable us to run over to France."

"To France! Oh, Lord! what nonsense!" groaned Messiter.

"What rot you talk."

"Can't we tack, or something! I don't know what they call it, but there is a way of going against the wind; I have seen sailor fellows do it. Let us tack, Dick, and get back again."

"No, thank you; I am not such a nincompoop as you. I mean to have a spree now, and go to France for a day or two."

"But we have no money."

"Never mind; we'll get some. You've no go in you. I should like to see you turned upon the world to get your own living. Why, you'd be just nowhere—not in the hunt," answered Dick, in a tone of disgust.

"I call it foolhardiness."

"I don't. The channel is not so very broad here, and we shall be able to make Dieppe with this wind, before noon to-morrow. I wish we had some grub."

He dived into the locker again as he spoke, and was lost to sight for a short time.

When he emerged he exclaimed:

"This is fizzing."

"What?" asked Messiter.

"There is grub in this locker."

"What have you found?"

"Some sandwiches, half a bologna sausage, and a small pigeon pie, as well as something which smells very much like ale, if I'm not much mistaken, in a stone jar."

"How do you account for that getting there?"

"I should imagine that some fellows had made arrangements with the owner of this boat to go out fishing in the morning, and they had put away their breakfast over night."

"Very kind of them, I'm sure," said Messiter, partially regaining his spirits at the prospect of a feed.

"Won't they be sold?" said Dick, with a grin.

"Rather."

"What'll you have? Here are all the delicacies of the season. Pigeon pie. It ought to be pigeon by the claws sticking up through the crust. I hope they haven't put too much steak in it."

"I'll try a bit."

Dick raked out a knife, and cut his friend's huge hunch of pigeon pie.

Messiter ate his with a keen relish.

"It's better than old Simcox's Dutch cheese," he said.

"I should think it was by a long chalk or old Mother Simcox's bread and scrape."

Dick raised the beer bottle to his mouth, and took a hearty draught.

"Have a swig?" he asked, extending it to Messiter.

"Thanks," replied the latter, adding, "I say, this isn't half so bad, is it?"

"Bad? I call it rattling good fun. Peg away. When you've done tucking in, I'll put the sail up, and you'll see how we'll cut along. How is the pie?"

"The pigeon's good, but the crust is rather chunky."

"Never mind; any port in a storm. Hold on tight to the tiller, and keep her well to larboard."

"What's that?"

"Larboard's left, and starboard's right."

Dick knew something about sailing, and soon got the sail up; then he took the tiller from Messiter, and said:

"You have a sleep somewhere. Pitch on the boards with your head in the locker, and you won't feel the wind so much."

Messiter followed his instructions, and was soon asleep.

The night was chilly, though clear and bright.

There was little difficulty in steering, and the little craft rode over the waves splendidly.

Dick had been on the sea before, and was what is called a pretty good sailor; that is, he did not suffer from seasickness, but the motion of the boat soon had an effect on his friend.

Messiter woke up feeling very uncomfortable, and made a rush to the side.

"Halloa!" cried Dick, "not going to commit suicide, I hope."

"I'm so ill. I think I shall be sick," replied Messiter.

"Go ahead, then. Feed the fishes. I dare say they won't object," Dick said, with a laugh.

Messiter made no reply for some seconds.

"Oh! I'm so bad; I think I shall die," he said. "It's all very fine for you to chaff. You can stand anything. You've got the best of it."

"I don't know so much about that," Dick replied. "It's jolly cold, and I'm getting sleepy; but if I don't keep a good lookout, we shall capsize, and it will be a case of stump. Here are you, my first mate, knocked into a cocked hat at starting, and all the work falls on me. Have I the best of it?"

Messiter had been very sick, and felt a little better, though his head was light and dizzy.

He crept into the locker again, and for some time Dick heard him groaning and grumbling to himself.

"I shan't take him to sea again," he muttered.

The hours passed slowly.

Dick knew that the Continent lay exactly opposite, and kept the boat in the proper course as well as he was able.

Towards five o'clock he got very drowsy.

He nodded, and his eyes closed.

Suddenly a peculiar sound fell upon his ears.

It was the measured beat of a steamer's engines.

In five minutes more he would have been under her bows.

She must have run him down and cut his boat in two.

"This won't do," he said, waking up.

In a twinkling he put the boat about and ran past the side of a huge outward-bound steamer, having a tonnage of not less than two thousand register.

Her lights were distinctly visible, and he could hear the officers on board giving their orders.

"A narrow shave, that. What I call a squeak for it," observed Dick to himself, as he found his little boat tugging in the heaving, hissing water in the wake of the big ship.

He took a pin out of his shirt collar and ran it into the calf of his leg.

"That will wake me up," he said.

Soon day broke, and he watched the sun rise with undisguised interest.

It was a magnificent sight.

"The cruise is worth all the trouble, if only to see that," he remarked.

Then he had his breakfast, some sausage and a draught of beer.

In the daylight there was little danger of being run down, as he could see the numerous ships which studied the expanse of the channel, ploughing their way to distant lands.

Messiter felt a little better after his night's rest, and volunteered to take the helm.

"No, thank you; my life's precious, and I don't feel inclined to trust it to you," answered Dick.

"But I'll be careful," said Messiter.

"So you say. By Jove! what an object you look."

"What's the matter with me?"

"You look washed out, that's all."

"I don't feel very lively, but my sleep's done me good. I haven't got that beastly feeling of seasickness now. Aren't you tired?"

"A little. I'm not made of cast-iron, but I shall hold out till we land, and then I shall knock up."

"I don't mind when I'm between the sheets in a good hotel, with the prospect of a jolly dinner when I wake up."

"Hotel! I should say the workhouse—that's what I'm looking forward to when we get into some port," said Messiter.

"There are no workhouses in France," answered Dick. "So you needn't fret about that. I shall say that I am a private gentleman's son, come over for a trip. We can enjoy ourselves till the bill comes in, and then I'll tell the landlord to telegraph to my father for the coin."

"Can you speak French?"

"Well enough to be understood, I'll bet. If you're a good boy, you shall have some frogs for dinner. I'll order them for you."

"Frogs?" said Messiter, with a shudder.

"Yes; they're the natural food of the country."

"Now you're laughing at me."

"Am I? Wait till we get there," replied Dick.

Towards three o'clock in the afternoon they sighted the French coast, and Dick followed in the wake of some fishing smacks, which he imagined were going into harbor with their cargoes.

Nor was he mistaken.

About six he sailed into smooth water, and brought up his boat at the side of the quay.

Several French sailors and a custom-house official or two came up to him.

"It's a pretty-looking town," observed Messiter.

"What place is this?" asked Dick, in French, not taking any notice of Messiter.

"Dieppe, monsieur," was the reply.

"Thank you. Which is the best hotel?"

"Hotel de Lille et d'Albion, monsieur," some one hastened to say. "It is close by. Shall I take your luggage?"

"I have none. We only ran over for a day or two. Show us the way to the Lille et d'Albion, and I shall be obliged to you; and, I say, who'll mind our yacht?"

"Monsieur's yacht?" answered the custom-house officer; "Pierre will see to that."

"Who's Pierre?"

The officer pointed to a hairy-looking Frenchman, who had a most vile smell about him of stale fish.

Pierre bowed and jabbered away in French, not one word of which Dick could understand.

"All right, old cock; so long as you won't run away with her, as we did," Dick said, in English.

They were now conducted to the hotel, where English was spoken by the head waiter, who had himself been in England at the time of the first Exhibition.

The boys asked for apartments, and ordered a few oysters and a cup of tea, after which they expressed their determination of going to bed early, as they were fatigued with their voyage.

"I'm as tired as a dog, and shan't want rocking," said Dick.

"I'm sure I ought to be very thankful to you for the way in which you have looked out," remarked Messiter.

"There are no bones broken," answered Dick. "Finish those oysters, and then let's go to sleep."

Scarcely had their heads touched the pillow than they were fast asleep and snoring.

CHAPTER IX.

A STAY AT DIEPPE.

In the morning the boys awoke like giants refreshed, and descended to the private room they had engaged for breakfast, which was provided in a liberal manner, the table being covered with cold meat, besides fish, etc.

"Fire away," said Dick, sitting down before the tea-urn. "It will be charged for all the same, whether we eat much or little."

"How is it to end?" asked Messiter, who was always timid.

"Oh, the governor or some one will come over and fetch us. I shall telegraph presently."

"I thought you had no money."

"No more I have."

"How can you telegraph without tin? Will they tick?"

"Not much," answered Dick. "I shall send to the landlord and ask him to lend me a nap or two. The telegram will go down in the bill."

"What's a nap?"

"Napoleon. Their sovereign, you know. It's twenty-five francs. They call them naps over here."

"Will he do it?"

"Of course he will."

After breakfast Dick spoke to the waiter, and said:

"I want this message sent by telegraph to my father. Give it to the landlord, and tell him to lend me a couple of napoleons. We came away in a hurry and forgot our purses."

Dick had written out the telegram, which ran thus:

"Hotel de Lille et d'Albion, Dieppe, France. From Dick Lightheart to the Rev. Septimus Lightheart. The Rectory, Ingarstone, near Hayward's Heath, Sussex. Dear father—We have arrived here in a boat. Will you kindly come and fetch us, and bring some money to pay our hotel bill? By 'we,' I mean my friend Messiter and myself. Will explain all when we meet. Do not be anxious about us. We are well and jolly. Perhaps you had best call on Mr Simcox. You know I always tumble on my feet."

The waiter bowed and went away, returning in about ten minutes with two pieces of gold on a silver salver, which Dick took up.

"That's plummy," he exclaimed when they were alone again. "I was pumped out. Only had sixpence half-penny, a knife, an old button and a bit of slate pencil."

"But you had some brandy-balls," said Messiter, smiling for the first time since they left Brighton.

"Yes, I had forgotten. Have one?"

"Don't mind if I do."

Dick handed his friend the paper containing the brandy-balls, the effort to get which had caused them to run so much risk.

"You see, we couldn't have got on without money," Dick continued. "I have a weakness for a clean shirt, and I am rather limp in the matter of a collar, to say nothing of buying a tooth-brush, enjoying a bathe in the sea, and having a drive in a fly."

"You're a genius, Dick," exclaimed Messiter, lost in admiration. "You'll get on in the world. I envy you, but I say"—

"What?"

"Shan't we get it when we return home?"

"Hot, I should say; but we shall have the comfort of knowing that we've had our spree, and that's something," Dick answered.

"I've had a welting before now; but I don't mind, if you don't," Messiter said, with a mournful look.

"And I haven't, which perhaps makes me think less of it than I otherwise should; but it's silly to spoil one's pleasure by thinking of disagreeables before they come. Better Simcox, let's go out."

They put on their caps and made a few purchases, such as a pair of gloves, shirts, collars, tooth-brushes, etc., and going back to the hotel, made themselves tidy. Dick observing that he felt decent, like a Christian.

They then sallied forth again, and had ices, tarts and cherry brandy, which was a combination of luxuries that made Messiter quite brave.

"I think I should punch Snarley's head if I saw him walking on the Parade," he said.

"Perhaps you'll have the chance," Dick answered. "Snarley may come over with, or instead of the governor."

Messiter's countenance fell.

"Do you think so?" he asked.

"It would not surprise me."

"After all, Snarley's too big to punch," Messiter answered. "I might run behind and kick him."

It was a charming morning, and the little picturesque French watering-place was crowded with visitors, who disported themselves all over the town.

The boys had a bathe, and declared that it was the pleasantest bathing they ever had; but every now and then they grew grave, for the thoughts of going back to Harrow House, and Mr. Simcox's rage would intrude upon them, like the death's head at the banquet, though neither of them liked to confess it one to the other.

"How about dinner, Dick?" said Messiter, who was growing hungry.

"I told the waiter we should dine at the table-d'hôte at six—that's the public dinner, you know, at which everybody dines, so if you feel peckish, we must make up with something out of doors. What do you say to a blow of oysters?"

"Oysters and stout?" said Messiter.

"Yes. Here's a shop. *Huitres*—that's oysters."

Accordingly they went into a shell-fish shop, and had some fine fat native oysters at three francs the dozen.

After which they hired a fly, and drove about for a couple of hours.

To give themselves an appetite for dinner, they took a blow on the pier.

"I should like to astonish the natives," said Dick, "and I think I know how to do it."

"How?" asked Messiter.

"You leave it to me."

"Don't do anything dangerous. I shouldn't like to be locked up."

"Nor I," answered Dick. "I can do it all myself, and you can keep out of it altogether, if you like."

"Oh, no, I won't do that. I can't leave you in the lurch. I'm not such a selfish, cowardly beast as all that comes to. Don't think that of me."

Seeing that Messiter was really hurt, Dick replied:

"I didn't mean that. You're a trump, Bob, and I have always said so, only you want bringing out. Your education isn't complete yet."

"It soon will be, if I am much with you," answered Messiter, laughing.

Dick did not reveal his plan to his companion, though he several times begged him to do so.

He made some mysterious purchases at a chemist's, and when at the hotel he mixed several powders together, putting all into a large paper bag when he had finished his preparations.

"You're not going to blow the town up, are you?" said Mr. Messiter.

"No, you donkey; not likely," answered Dick.

"But I heard you ask for some saltpetre."

"Possibly."

"And charcoal and brimstone, and all things like that."

"What then? Wait patiently, and you'll see what you will see," Dick rejoined, with an air of the closest secrecy.

At dinner their appearance created a little sensation, as it had been rumored that they had crossed the channel in the night in a small boat all by themselves.

But they were English boys, and the English do such funny things in the opinion of all foreigners, that the curiosity was not very great.

Nevertheless they were asked several questions, which Dick answered with the air of a man of thirty.

He said they often took cruises in their yacht.

He meant to go to America some day in her—all the way from Brighton to New York, across the Atlantic.

The ladies fell in love with him, and their admiration was so great, that many of them kissed him, and called him a pretty, fair-haired, brave English boy.

"Ah!" said Dick, in his best French, to a lady of title, who was petting and making a great fuss with him; "ah, Madame la Marquise, your brave countrymen can do what they like on the land if they are not betrayed, while we English take to the sea naturally, and make ourselves masters of it."

This compliment pleased the French vastly, and they drank his health, and he drank theirs.

"Let's get out of this," he whispered to his friend.

"I shall get screwed, or have a stomache-ache, or something, if I go on drinking their beastly wine like this."

"All right, I'm ready," replied Messiter.

They arose and bowed to the company, and taking up their caps in the hall, strolled arm in arm along the Parade towards the pier.

As the season of the year was approaching autumn, the evenings began to draw in, and the pier was deserted about eight o'clock.

Though the people retired, Dick lingered, though Messiter did not know why.

"Now's the time," said Dick, as the shades of night began to fall.

"Time for what?" asked Messiter.

"To surprise the frog-eaters."

He put his bag down on the woodwork of the pier as he spoke, and opened it a little.

Then he placed a long strip of brown paper partly inside, and let the remainder hang out.

"What is that?" inquired Messiter, who was very curious about the proceedings.

"A slow match," answered Dick. "It will burn ten minutes, and I reckon we can get to the end of the pier comfortably before that time if we run."

"But"—

"Don't jaw," exclaimed Dick. "I'm busy, and you put me out."

Messiter was silent, while his companion placed the bag in a conspicuous position, struck a match, and set light to the slow match.

"Now then, run!" he cried.

They started off as fast as their legs would carry them, and, being last on the pier, did not encounter any one.

"Gently now," said Dick. "I don't want the sentries at the end to see us."

There being a regiment quartered in the town, a sentry was on duty at the pier near the custom-house.

Messiter was making efforts to recover his breath.

"Don't puff and blow like a grampus," exclaimed Dick.

"I can't get my wind," answered Messiter.

"Go without it, then."

They walked on the quay without exciting the attention of the sentries, and joined the people walking up and down from the custom-house to the *Etalblissement* and *Grande Rue*, and back again.

"Come into this wine shop," Dick exclaimed, "and we'll have some cherry brandy, and I say"—

"Well?"

"Keep your eyes on the pier-head."

"Never fear," answered Messiter. "I'm as anxious as possible to know what your little game is."

They had not long to wait.

Suddenly a lurid flame burst out on the pier, shining with the utmost brightness.

And as it was at the back of the light-house—that is to say, facing the town, the little tower reflected it with the utmost brilliancy.

"I say, Dick!" cried Messiter; "the pier's on fire!"

"Is it?" said Dick. "What's that to us?"

"It's you. I know you've done it. It must be that stuff you had in the bag."

"Hold your row!" exclaimed Dick, between his teeth, "unless you want me to scrag you! Do you wish to see me locked up by those red-legged French soldiers?"

"No, but"—

"Shut up, I tell you!" Dick interrupted, squeezing his arm till he hurt him.

Messiter said no more.

The flame, which was as red as that of the setting sun, burned brighter and yet more brightly every moment.

Crowds assembled in the street, and talked excitedly to one another.

The *generals* was beaten at the guard-house, and a company of soldiers advanced to the beat of the drum.

They whole of the houses on the quay were lit up by the glare of the fire.

When excited by any strange occurrence, the French people can excel any other in gesticulating, talking and making a noise.

It was generally supposed that the pier was on fire at its extreme point.

The firemen came out in a body, and advanced with the citizens to the fire, buckets in hand.

The military kept the crowd back with their bayonets crossed.

"Oh, do let us go and see it," said Messiter.

"There's nothing to see. It will go out directly," answered Dick.

"What is it, then?"

"Red fire, that's all. We made some at home last November on Guy Fawkes' Day, and as I recollected the recipe, I thought it would be a good dodge to get up a sensation over here amongst these benighted frog-eaters."

"Is that all?" said Messiter, much comforted.

"Won't it do any harm?"

"Not at all—only make them all mad and wild when they find out they have been hoaxed."

As Dick spoke, the fire went out all at once, and the change from the lurid glare to blank darkness was quite as striking as the outbreak of the flame had been.

The firemen had rushed up to the pier to extinguish the conflagration, and when they got there, all they found was the remains of some chemical compound, which, in a brief space, had burnt itself out without doing any more harm than slightly scorching the woodwork.

Their annoyance was extreme.

When the fact became known, the people laughed and declared that it was a good joke, but that the perpetrators of it ought to be punished, and the authorities of the town offered a reward of five pounds (125 francs) for the discovery of the offenders.

The people of Dieppe were in a state of commotion for about half an hour, and during the remainder of the evening nothing else was talked about.

It was half-past nine when the boys started to return to their hotel.

"I shall have some supper and turn in," exclaimed Messiter.

"So shall I; but I shall go into the smoking-room with the men for a short time to hear what they say."

"Do you think they will suspect us?"

"Never, in a blue moon. Why should they?" answered Dick.

"I don't see any reason. But it was awfully daring in you."

"It was well done, and we didn't get bowled out, which is all I care about."

"I can't do it as you do."

"No, because you haven't had the practice that I have, and you don't love a joke as I do. I am so fond of joking that I don't care what risk I run, and as long as I can remember, I liked playing tricks upon people."

"Here's the 'Lille et'—what do you call it?" said Messiter.

"'Albion,'" supplied Dick.

They entered the hotel, and the waiter exclaimed:

"Gentlemen to see you, sir."

"Eh!—what?" cried Dick.

Messiter felt as if he could sink into his boots.

"Come by the steamer an hour ago, sir, from New-haven."

Dick thought he detected a grin upon the waiter's face.

"What sort of a gentleman is he?" he inquired.

"Tall—thin—not very old, sir—wears a white tie."

"Oh, by jove! it's a case," muttered Messiter. "I'll swear that's Snarley."

"My governor wears a white tie, too," said Dick.

They hesitated a moment.

"What shall I say, sir?" exclaimed the waiter.

"Where is he?" exclaimed Dick.

"In the coffee-room, sir."

"Did he ask for us?"

"He brought your telegram with him, sir. I suppose he went at once to New-haven, caught the boat, and came over."

"Oh, very well. I shall be very glad to see him presently, but I have a purchase or two to make, so we must go out again for a short time. Tell him to make himself comfortable, and let him have anything he likes to eat and drink."

"Very well, sir."

Dick took Messiter's arm and moved towards the door.

"Not so fast, young gentlemen!" exclaimed a voice, alas! but too well known.

It was Mr. Snarley.

Messiter was in such a fright that he sank into one of the hall chairs, the picture of misery and despair.

"How do, sir?" said Dick, preserving his serenity.

"How do, sir? What do you mean, sir, by such impudence?" cried Mr. Snarley, white with rage. "I have heard all about you! I have been listening!"

"Not for the first time," muttered Dick.

"What are you mumbling about! Don't incense me! Tell me to make myself comfortable, and give me what I like to eat and drink, while you get away!"

"I couldn't be more hospitable, and if you don't like the 'Lille et d'Albion,' you'd better go somewhere else. I shall stay here."

Dick put his hands in his pockets, as he spoke, with a determined air, and stared the usher hard in the face.

Mr. Snarley was literally speechless with rage, and could only glare at him, being utterly unable to say anything.

CHAPTER X.

MR. SNARLEY'S ARRIVAL.

WHEN Mr. Snarley found his voice, he had had time to reason with himself, and he then saw the necessity for curbing his anger, which, in the place in which he was, would only make him ridiculous.

Already some of the people staying in the hotel, and the waiters, had lingered in the hall to listen to what was going on, though as the conversation was carried on in English, they were not much the wiser.

"Wait till I get them home again," was Mr. Snarley's mental exclamation.

"What I want to say, sir," exclaimed Dick, "is that while we are here, you must not let people think that you are the master and we the pupils."

"Why not?" asked the usher, smiling in spite of himself.

"Because we have a character to keep up. We have said that we were going to send to my father to come and fetch us, and that we were in the habit of going out in our little yacht, only we got blown a little too far, and made for the coast of France."

"Very well. You have a private room, I suppose? Let me be your guest. We can talk better in private," answered Mr. Snarley.

Dick led the way, followed by the usher and Messiter, and the gathering crowd dispersed.

The waiter brought up some tea and a couple of cold fowls, which made an excellent supper.

Mr. Snarley did not attempt to bully them as at first, but talked to them more as if he had been a parent than a tutor.

"Of course you will be punished when you return to Harrow House," he said; "but that is Mr. Simcox's affair, not mine."

"What will he do with us, do you think sir?" asked Messiter.

"I cannot tell. He will probably decide upon your degrees of guilt, and see who was most to blame. That you deserve punishment I do not deny, for you must admit that it was a most foolhardy thing to cross the channel in such a cockleshell of a boat as I hear you had."

"We could not help it," replied Dick. "We only went out to get some brandy-balls, and to avoid being taken back by you, we got into the boat and pushed off, only thinking we should float a little way, and be able to scull back."

"Why did you not?"

"Because there were no oars. The wind and tide were against us, so we set the sail, and stood over to France."

"How did you manage to steer?"

"Well enough," answered Dick. "You have taught us geography, and I knew we should get to Dieppe. Our only danger was the chance of being cut in half by a steamer. In fact, sir, we took French leave. It was more my fault than Messiter's. I told him what to do."

"Then you take all the blame on yourself?" said Mr. Snarley.

"Entirely, sir. It is no use for both of us to be in the row."

"I admire your generosity, and shall report what you say to Mr. Simcox. And now what do you think of going to bed, as we shall have to be up early to catch the first steambot?"

The boys made no objections, as they were tired with roaming about all day.

Dick told Mr. Snarley of his obligation to the landlord, and the usher promised to see the debt of the two napoleons paid.

They were up early, and down at the quay at eight o'clock, seeing their luggage put on board the boat.

By their luggage we mean the little craft they had come over in, which the owner was very anxious might be restored to him, and the cheapest way of getting it back was to take it with them.

While the steamer was getting up steam, and the usher was purchasing the tickets at the bureau, a man came up with something in a tub which he showed to Dick, asking him to buy it, foreigners having an idea that Englishmen and boys are insane enough to buy anything.

"What is it?" inquired Dick.

"An electric eel," replied the man.

"Hang your impudence," said Dick. "What do I want with electric eels? Stop a bit, though, what does it do?"

The man explained that if you put your hand in the water, you received a slight shock, and if you touched the slimy thing, you felt as if you had come in contact with a galvanic battery.

"Oh, that's it, is it? How much?" said Dick.

"Ten francs," replied the man.

"Ten humbugs!" exclaimed Dick. "I'll give you five."

"Say six, monsieur, and the eel is yours."

"All right. Go down to the boat and put it on board, tub and all. Here's the *l'argent*," said Dick.

The man pocketed the money and the boys followed him to the *paguot*, to see it safely bestowed.

"What a funny fellow you are," said Messiter.

"Am I?" answered Dick unconcernedly.

"Yes. What on earth can you want with such a thing as an electric eel?"

Dick bent down and whispered:

"Snarley!"

Messiter comprehended his meaning in a moment, and grinned with delight.

"That's spiffing," he replied. "Oh, my! won't he jump!"

"He may jump overboard for what I care. I hate the beast," remarked Dick, with the same low tone, but with a vindictive energy which showed that he meant what he said.

In a short time the steamboat started, and clearing

the bar, began to cross the channel in the direction of Nowhaver.

Dick sat on deck, near the boat in which they had crossed over, which was called the "Lively Polly."

He was silent, and meditatively sucked the last but one of his brandy-balls.

Mr. Snarley approached him.

"Well, Lighthouse, what are you thinking of? Pleasant thoughts, eh?—a penny for them," exclaimed the usher, grinning malevolently, as he fancied that Dick was down on his luck, and melancholy at the prospect of the thrashing in store for him on his arrival.

"Money first, sir, and you shall have them," answered Dick.

Mr. Snarley gave him a penny, saying:

"There you are; but don't speak with your mouth full."

"It's only a brandy-ball, sir. Have one? I've got one left."

"Goodness me, no! I wouldn't put such trash in my stomach," answered the usher.

"If you won't, I will, though you might have said thank you," Dick exclaimed, as he put the last of the sweets into his mouth.

"Now for your thoughts."

"I was thinking of the 'Lively Polly,' sir."

"Good gracious me! Is it possible that you have formed some acquaintance of that name during your short stay in Dieppe? What a precocious boy!"

Dick laughed.

"It's not a woman or a girl, sir. It's the boat here, and a neater and tauter craft never ploughed the bottom of the deep," he said.

"You're becoming poetical," observed Mr. Snarley, with an air of disappointment. "What have you got in that tub?"

"That's something livelier than Polly, sir," replied Dick. "It's going to be my pet. I mean to keep it in the school-room near my desk."

"But what is it?"

"A tame eel, sir."

"A what?—a tame eel! I never heard of such a thing," said Mr. Snarley.

"We live and learn, sir; men as well as schoolboys," said Dick, demurely.

"And you propose to keep such a thing as that?"

"Certainly sir."

"It is unfortunate for you that you did not ask my permission before you made such a silly purchase, and threw your money away on such rubbish."

"Won't you let me keep it, sir?" asked Dick, with an air of assumed regret.

"By no means."

"Poor old boy," exclaimed Dick, putting his hand in the water and pretending to touch it, which he took good care not to do.

The eel remained quiet at the bottom of the tub.

In an instant Dick felt a very strange tingling all up his arm, and withdrew it, feeling rather uncomfortable.

"Aren't you afraid of it?" inquired the usher.

"No, sir. It's quite tame, and won't bite because it's had its teeth drawn. Do let me keep it. Poor old Nap! It's christened Nap, after the emperor, and was intended for the Prince Imperial."

Messiter was hiding his face, as he was bursting with laughter, and did not want to be detected in the act.

"I shall throw the nasty thing overboard. You shan't take it to school, that's flat," said Snarley. He turned to lift the tub, but it was too heavy.

"Very well, sir," exclaimed Dick, with a sigh of resignation. "I deserve that you should be a little harsh with me, for I have been very bad and disobedient, but I'll try and be better in future, and earn your good opinion. Take the eel and throw him overboard. Hold him tightly by the neck, or he'll slip through your fingers."

"Come," said Snarley, soothed; "you are not so hardened as I thought you."

"It's only the devilment I've got in me, sir."

"Where there is shame, there may be reformation. You have heard that before, I suppose?"

"No, sir. Thank you for telling me. I'll try and remember it. Was Henry the Eighth ashamed of himself for having so many wives, and was his shame the cause of the reformation we read about in his reign?"

"Nonsense!" said Snarley.

"I did not know, sir. I beg your pardon. You may have the eel, sir. Will you ask Mr. Simcox to let me off?" Dick replied in the same penitent voice.

"I hope he won't go on like that any longer. I shall have a fit if he does," muttered Messiter.

Dick heard him gurgling in the distance, with suppressed laughter, and taking the half-sucked brandy-ball out of his mouth, threw it at him, and hit him in the eye by way of warning.

"I can't go so far as that, Lighthouse," said Mr. Snarley. "But I will try and beg you off some part of your punishment."

"Thank you, sir. Will you have the eel now?"

"Yes. You are sure he is harmless?" answered Snarley, tucking up his sleeves.

"Quite, sir. He's like a baby. Old Nap wouldn't hurt a child. That's right, sir: take both hands to him, one for the head, and another for the tail. Won't he be glad to get into the sea again? His native element, I may say."

Mr. Snarley bent over the tub, and looked at the eel, which was not a very formidable monster, being about four feet long, and just thick enough to grasp easily with the hand.

The day was somewhat cloudy, but fine, there being little or no wind stirring so the ship did not roll, and the passengers were all on deck, enjoying the passage, which was pronounced a good one so far.

"Now, sir, go in and win," said Dick.

"Oblige me, Lighthouse, by not addressing me in that slangy way," remarked the usher.

"Beg pardon, sir. Now or never. Hold him tight. Poor Nap!"

Mr. Snarley dived into the tub, and dexterously seized the eel with both hands, bringing it into the air, and holding it very tightly in spite of its wriggling, which was excessive.

Suddenly he stopped short on his way to the side of the boat, and becoming rigid, uttered such piercing cries that the passengers and some of the crew came up to him.

The eel had slipped from his grasp, and was sliding about on the deck.

"Oh—oh! my poor arm, my poor body!" groaned Snarley.

"What's the matter?" asked the captain, who had descended from the bridge.

"He's caught the sea serpent," said Dick.

At this there was a general laugh.

Mr. Snarley bestowed a look upon him which seemed to say:

"I'll 'sea serpent' you, my young gentleman, when I get a chance."

"What is it?" asked one gentleman, who was a doctor.

"It's the devil!" answered Snarley, who had received a succession of strong electrical shocks from the creature, and was in great pain and trembling all over.

Never having heard of an electric eel, he could not understand it.

"Pitch it overboard," said the captain to one of the sailors.

The man touched it, but recoiled instantly, with aggravated pins and needles up his arm.

"Blow me if I touch the beggar again!" said the man, rubbing his arm.

"Here's a lark," said Messiter, who had joined Dick.

"Hold your row. Listen to Snarley," answered Dick.

"The thing seemed to sting me," said Snarley to the doctor. "I don't know how I feel. I'm all over a tingle. I've got sharp shooting pains all over me. I believe my system's poisoned."

"Nonsense," replied the doctor, "it will wear off. Have some brandy and water. It's an electric eel—that's what it is. You'll feel the effects for some time, but you will sustain no lasting injury."

"Oh! oh! oh!" was all Snarley could say, as the pains continued to dart through him.

"You're galvanized," exclaimed the doctor.

"Am I?" said Snarley, as if the fact was a matter of perfect indifference to him.

"You are indeed. I shall send a report of your case to the *Lancet*, which is our principal medical paper. Will you take the eel up again? I should like to be able to report your symptoms after the second shock."

"Not if I know it," said Snarley, savagely.

"In the interests of science," urged the doctor.

"Bother science! Do you want to kill me outright?"

"Let me persuade you, my dear sir."

"I'll be hanged if I do. Oh, oh! as if I hadn't enough and to spare."

Then Snarley's gaze fell upon Dick, who was enjoying the scene with sparkling eyes.

"All right, my boy," exclaimed Snarley, with concentrated hatred. "That's another chalk to you. I'll not forget you."

"Thank you, sir. But wouldn't it be better if you did not set us the example of talking slang? What is a chalk?" said Dick.

Mr. Snarley shook his fist at Dick, and allowed himself to be led below by the doctor, who, during the remainder of the journey, plied him with brandy and water, which he made the steward put down to Snarley's account, and bothered him with a variety of questions as to his sensations at the time of contact with the eel and afterwards, until Snarley was scarcely aware whether he stood on his head or his heels, and began to entertain a firm opinion that he had had an encounter with the great sea serpent, in the middle of the vast Atlantic, and had come off victorious after slaying his adversary.

At last he fell off to sleep, as tipsy as he could be, and the doctor, closing his note-book, left him.

Meanwhile the eel had been swept overboard with a broom, and his tub thrown after him, the latter act being Dick's doing.

"You have thrown my eel overboard," he said, "without my permission, and I chose to throw his tub after him."

"But it's a good tub, and worth something. It'll come in handy," said the captain.

"Never mind; it's my tub. I paid for it, and I shall throw it after my eel. He may want it," replied Dick.

So over the tub went, and Dick sat down once more near the "Lively Polly" as if nothing had happened, with Messiter by his side.

"I say," exclaimed Messiter.

"Well," answered Dick.

"Snarley will have it ready for us after this."

"We were in for it before. Whatever Snarley may say won't have any influence over old Simcox. I expect, though, I shall catch it, and you'll get off."

"I don't know."

"But I do. I shall say it was all my doings, and get you off. What's the use of both of us being licked, eh?" replied Dick.

"No," said Messiter. "But it's very kind of you, Dick, and very generous to think of me in such a way. Most fellows would like to have a companion in misfortune."

"I'll make it all square and smooth for you, never fear."

Messiter took Dick's hand, and wrung it heartily.

"If ever I get the chance, I'll return your kindness, and stick to you like a brick. You're a wonder, and I never saw a fellow in my life I liked so much as I do you," he said.

Dick smiled, and returned the pressure of his friend's hand.

He had a large heart, and was not a sneak, if he was the scamp of the family.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK HOLE.

THE arrival of Dick and Messiter at Harrow House caused no little sensation.

It had leaked out that the boys had gone to France, and it was known that Mr. Snarley had been sent over to fetch them back, because Mr. Simcox had told one of the house-maids so, and she had told one of the head boys.

But the particulars of the strange voyage were not known, and much speculation was rife.

Dick and Messiter were sent into the school-room about tea-time, and surrounded as soon as they entered, each having his circle, and they told their story exactly as it had occurred.

The boys admired them immensely, and they were naturally the heroes of the hour.

In a short time Mr. Simcox entered, and took his place at his desk.

There was a dead silence.

Unlocking his desk, the professor took from it a long, lithe, glistening cane.

With this he struck the desk three times.

Those who knew him well saw from his face that he was annoyed, if not seriously angry.

The tea had not been announced, and it was presumed that it had been postponed.

Mr. Snarley leaned against the door, looking very limp and fishy about the eyes.

"Young gentlemen of Harrow House School," began Mr. Simcox, after the third rap of the cane.

Everyone looked at the professor.

"An event of rare occurrence has taken place in our midst," he went on. "Two boys have dared to set an example of the most flagrant disobedience. They shall stand forth. Lighthouse and Messiter, stand up on that bench in front of me."

The culprits thus designated got up on the bench, and stood with their hands behind them and their eyes cast down.

"Your offense," continued Mr. Simcox, "is one which it is impossible to overlook, nor have I any inclination to do so, because I can see no extenuating circumstances in your case."

"I am willing to bear all the blame, sir," said Dick. "Messiter acted under my advice throughout. In fact, he couldn't help himself, and it would not be fair to do anything to him."

"Very well, that simplifies matters," said Mr. Simcox. "I do not wish to confound the innocent with the guilty. Go to your seat, Messiter, thanking your stars for your good fortune, and let this be a lesson to you as long as you live."

Messiter sprang down and was gone in an instant, though he looked pityingly at Dick when he got to his place.

"At most schools," Mr. Simcox went on, "you would be expelled, Lighthouse; but I adopt a different system."

"I pronounce no boy irreclaimable, however wicked he may seem to be. Far from it, I give him another and another chance."

"The black sheep may become white—*nil desperandum*; and now, instead of sending you home to your father's house, which I have no doubt would delight you extremely, I am going to cane you severely."

Here he flourished the cane, and brought it down with a sounding thrack on the desk.

"And, having done that, you will be put in the black hole for four-and-twenty hours, on a diet of bread and water, when your aching back, and the solitude which will surround you may, let us trust, bring you to a proper sense of the duty you owe to those who are set in authority over you. You hear your sentence. Now what is it for? We want to hear your confession."

Dick remained obstinately silent.

"I will speak for you, though I have no doubt we shall make you find your voice presently."

The professor laughed, and looked around him for applause.

"First of all," said the professor, "you go out at night without leave; you run away from the usher, who goes after you; you get into a boat which does not belong to you; you set the sail and go to France, and behave like a fast young scamp, showing symptoms which must be knocked out of you, if we wish you to turn out an honest, steady man, and a respectable member of society. Venner, do your duty."

Venner was the biggest boy in the school, though not at the top of the first class.

Indeed, he was nearly at the bottom of the second, for his superiority was in his bodily, not his mental strength.

Whenever a boy was caned, it was Venner's duty to "horse" him; that is, to take him on his back and, holding his wrists around his own neck, keep him in a favorable position for the head master's blows.

Stepping out from his companions, Venner went up to Dick, and told him to put his arms round his neck, which Dick did, seeing that resistance would be useless.

In an instant Venner gave a quick jerk, and Dick found himself perfectly helpless, and tightly held.

Then Venner turned around, and took up a position in an open space, so as to give the professor's arm full play.

Swish went the cane through the air, descending on the offender's back with a dull thud.

At first these were the only sounds to be heard, but as the pain increased to positive torture, and the elastic cane bent double and twisted around his jacket, actually cutting the cloth, Dick began to add his cries to the noise.

At length he screamed with pain, and kicked violently, receiving the blows on the calves of his legs; but he was unable to liberate himself, and it was not until the cane broke off at the top, by coming in contact with the boy's boots, that the professor desisted from his efforts.

Venner let him slide down on to the floor, where he rolled about for more than a minute, writhing in uncontrollable pain.

"That is the first lesson," said Mr. Simcox. "You see, my young friend, I am not to be trifled with. I shall be prepared to repeat the lesson if you give me cause. There is nothing like a good caning to bring a boy to his senses. It hurts, and the pain lasts. You are bruised all over, and you will feel your hurts for some time. Now, Mr. Snarley, your aid, if you please, to convey him to the black hole. *In carcere duro*, literally, in a hard prison, he will remain until to-morrow at this hour."

Snarley had been enjoying the scene, for it was a pleasure to his mean and narrow mind to see Dick suffer, because he had played him so many tricks.

Though still very shaky from the effects of his sea voyage and the brandy and water, he advanced with alacrity, and, raising the boy up, half pushed him, half dragged him from the room.

Dick's face was flushed, and his cheeks stained with tears.

Sobs broke from him at intervals, and it was evident that he had gone through a severe castigation, which was no joke.

Messiter pitied him sincerely.

They took him down stairs, past the kitchen, into a long passage, at the end of which was the coal cellar.

A light which Mr. Simcox had taken from the cook enabled them to see a door with a key in it.

Throwing this back, a dark and gloomy vault of narrow dimensions was disclosed.

It had the appearance of being a disused wine cellar. In one corner was a small mattress, looking rather mouldy and damp.

Mr. Snarley gave him a spiteful push and he fell upon this rough sort of bed.

"Lock him up!" exclaimed Mr. Simcox.

The usher pulled to the door, and turned the key. Dick was alone in the dark.

The professor and his satellite went up stairs together.

"I think we shall cure him, sir," said Mr. Snarley.

"It shall be kill or cure," answered the professor.

"I never allow myself to be beaten by my boys."

"Quite right, too, sir."

"Have you given him his bread and water, Mr. Snarley?"

"No, sir; I forgot it."

"Please do so before you go to bed. He must not be starved. The mind does not suffer so acutely as when the body is attacked by the pangs of hunger and thirst."

"I'll not forget, sir," Mr. Snarley replied.

After this, tea was served in the dining-room, and the boys trooped in to enjoy their "sky blue and lemon squeezy."

The usher who had taken Dick had so frightened them that they all spoke in a subdued tone.

"Didn't the governor lay it on?" one would remark.

"Rather. I never saw him so savage," another would reply.

"They haven't licked him yet," Messiter observed to Venner, after tea.

"What did he holler for, then? That looked as if he gave in," answered Venner.

"So would you sing out," said Messiter, "if you were lammed into at that rate. Wait till Lightheart recovers, and he'll be worse than ever. I know him better than you do."

"He'll catch it again then."

"I don't think he will; he'll bolt first. But it's no use talking to you," replied Messiter; "you like to horse fellows. You're like the sworn tormentor of the old Tower of London."

As he spoke, Messiter dived under the table to avoid having his ears pulled, coming up on the other side, and at a safe distance from Venner's burly form.

He was right, however, about Dick, who was only shocked and stunned for the moment.

It would take a good deal more than that to beat the devil out of him, as will be seen shortly.

CHAPTER XII.

ALONE IN THE DARK.

PERHAPS few sensations are so disagreeable as that of being plunged suddenly into total darkness.

Though in the midst of solitude as profound as possible, you fancy a thousand kind of noises, and fret the mind by imagining things that exist only in the imagination.

We have proved that Dick was brave, but after all he was only a boy, and when he found himself alone in the dark, and remembered that he had to put up with such confinement for four and twenty hours, a feeling of despair seized him.

There was indeed a terror, and the two combined to make him very nervous.

He began to cry out at the top of his voice, and utter unearthly shrieks; but no one could hear him on account of the thickness of the doors, and the remote position of the cellar.

Then he fancied he was being stifled and could not draw his breath, though this was really impossible, as a current of air was introduced through a hole in the wall, which communicated with the larder, a place always kept cool and fresh.

"I may have put me in here to kill me," said Dick to himself, giving away to his panic fear.

"I know I shall die. Oh, this is horrible," and again the cell resounded with his shrieks.

The echoes of his voice sounded like the mocking voices of demons, and his hair grew stiff, as he thought the place haunted.

For nearly two hours his agitation lasted, and no one but himself knew what he suffered during that time.

When the panic was over, he sat down on the floor to think calmly over his situation.

"What a fool I was to think I should be suffocated, and that there were ghosts," he said. "Of course it is not their interest to kill me. Simcox only wants to break my spirit, and if I give way again, as I did at first, he'll do it. I shall be all right if I keep quiet. How thirsty I am, though."

He was consumed by a burning thirst, and made a search around the cellar for some water without finding any, though Mr. Snarley was on his way with a pitcher full at that very moment, and a not very appetizing hunch of dry bread.

There was a click, as of a key in the lock.

"Some one coming," said Dick.

He guessed it was Mr. Snarley, and an idea struck him.

Standing up near the door, he awaited the appearance of the usher.

Mr. Snarley threw open the door, and allowed the light to enter.

It dazzled Dick, who put his hand over his eyes.

"Here's some bread and water for you," said Snarley, brutally. "It's all you'll have."

He looked at him with a sort of pleasurable satisfaction, and seemed to enjoy the position in which he was.

"Why don't you lie down?" he asked.

"Because there's a young rat in the straw, sir. It's got a nest there, and bit me," answered Dick.

"Young rat? Nonsense! But if there is, it is only what a wicked boy like you must expect. You may think yourself lucky there are no snakes, as there are in some prisons."

"It's bad enough to be in the dark, sir, without being bitten by rats, and if I were to write home, and tell my father that you shut me up to be eaten and frightened by rats, he wouldn't like it. I only ask you to drive it out for me, sir," said Dick.

"Oh, please do! I shan't care so much then," he added in an imploring tone.

Moved by this piteous appeal, and thinking the request, after all, a reasonable one, Mr. Snarley said:

"I will see what I can do."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried Dick, gleefully.

"Hold the candle, and stand away from the door, while I kick the straw, and start the animal on his travels."

Dick did as he was told, and waited till the usher began to kick the straw about.

Then he made a sudden dive through the door, which he instantly shut and locked, the key being on the outside.

In his hand he held the candlestick.

Snarley was in the dark, shut up with his bread and water.

"Let him hunt rats," said Dick, smiling.

The kitchen clock struck eleven.

At that hour the servants had all gone to bed, and he knew that the house was still.

The usher had put off his visit to him until the last thing.

Dick had acted upon a sudden impulse in caging the usher, and had not considered what he should do afterwards.

Now he stood still and thought.

He fancied he could hear Mr. Snarley's voice through the thick oaken door, but he could not distinguish what he said.

"What a lark!" thought Dick; "everybody to-morrow will be saying 'Where's Snarley?'"

It was rather cold in the passage, and Dick, being hungry and thirsty, determined, before he did anything else, to satisfy his appetite.

He opened the door next to the black hole, and was delighted to find himself in a spacious larder.

In a bowl stood some delicious milk, which he was able to drink by stooping down, and he took a good draught.

On a shelf was half a cold chicken, left from the professor's supper; on another plate was some cut ham and cooked sausages.

"These will do finely," said Dick, helping himself to each of the dainties, using his fingers for want of a knife and fork.

"Old Simcox will go short to-morrow, and cookey will think the cats have been on the larder. But one won't know it's a tale told by an old woman, that the black hole has made me. I hope Snarley will have to eat all his bread and drink all his water."

At that moment a deep groan startled him.

He jumped up, and nearly dropped his plate.

It was followed by another, and then he saw that it came from a hole in the wall.

"What an ass I am," he muttered; "I might have remembered that the black hole is next to this, and the sound comes from Snarley through some crevice or other."

Putting his mouth to a slit he saw in the wall, he exclaimed, "Snarley!"

"Who calls?" replied a squalid old voice.

"It's Lightheart. I am in the larder, and pegging away at the governor's prog. Wouldn't you like a bit of cold chicken, sir, or a nice thin slice of ham, or what the vulgar boys call a 'sausage'?"

"Look, my dear, good day, Dick! what have you done?" exclaimed Mr. Snarley. "I am rejoiced at this opportunity of conversing with you. It is a fortunate chance. You will let me out, will you not?"

"And get put back myself? No, thank you," answered Dick.

Each time he spoke he put his mouth to the hole, and then placed his ear there to receive the answer.

"The punishment will be dreadful—I do not hesitate to say dreadful, if you leave me here," answered the usher.

"I'll chance that. Did you find the rat, sir?"

"Dick, listen to reason. You will be found out, and then you will be sorry. I will undertake that you shall be pardoned, and sleep in your bed to-night."

"I fully intend to, sir. But about that rat?"

"You young rascal, I'll rat you!" cried Mr. Snarley.

"Let me out, or I'll know the reason why."

"Don't get excited, sir. It's no use running your head against a brick wall. Shall I put something through the ventilator?" asked Dick.

Without waiting for an answer he pushed a chicken bone through the hole.

"Oh, my eye," cried Mr. Snarley; "he's poked my eye out."

"Good-night, sir," said Dick. "I hope that rat won't disturb your rest. Very nice straw, clean and dry. Very wholesome bread and water. Good-night, sir; see you again to-morrow."

Regardless of the usher's cries and exclamations, he had another drink of milk, and overhauled a plate that contained some cold veal, to which he paid his respects.

"I haven't done so badly," he said; "and now to have a look at Messiter. The old boy will stare when he sees me."

Taking off his boots, he proceeded cautiously up stairs, pausing as he went past Mr. Simcox's study.

The professor had a light burning, and was correcting some English exercises for the fourth class.

"I'll wake him up presently," was Dick's muttered exclamation as he went by.

Pushing open the door of his room, he heard Messiter snoring. He had previously put out the candle, and the room was in darkness.

Shaking Messiter's arm, he whispered:

"Time to get up."

"Is it?" answered Messiter, rubbing his eyes. "Is that you, Dick? I thought"—

"What?" asked Dick, waiting for him to collect his thoughts.

"Why, they hyked you off to the black hole, didn't they?"

"Yes, and I've got out again."

"Did you really, though?"

"I think my being here is the best proof of that," replied Dick.

"Is it really you, though?" asked Messiter, grasping his arm.

"If it isn't, it's my ghost."

"Oh, don't talk of ghosts; the very idea makes me shiver."

"Ghosts don't generally talk. I tell you it is me; all as right as ninepence."

"How did you get out?" inquired Messiter.

"Snarley came with bread and water, and while he was hunting for an imaginary rat I had talked about to him, I popped out and locked the door."

"Is Snarley inside?" asked Messiter, grinning with delight.

"Rather. He might as well try to get out of Newgate as out of where I have left him."

"You are a fellow!" cried Messiter. "But aren't you hungry?"

"Not I," replied Dick. "I've had a stunning good feed in the larder; cold chicken, and ham, and milk, and sausages, and veal. I haven't had such a regular buster since I've been here. Somebody will have to suffer through it."

"It's the governor's grub, I suppose?"

"It was, you mean; it's gone now. But I don't care whose it was. I've polished it off, and I'm all the better for it I can tell you."

"Wasn't it awful in there?" Messiter inquired, with a shudder.

"Awful isn't the word for it. You know I am not easily funk, but I thought I should have had a fit for the first hour. It'll do Snarley good."

And Dick laughed heartily at the idea of the usher being shut up in the black hole.

"I am so jolly glad that Snarley's in for it. He did joke to the boys about your being shut up. He said he'd cure you of running off as you had done; and he was at me all the evening, throwing off all sorts of nasty things."

"Perhaps he'll let me alone for the future, and think I'm a match for him."

"What a fuss there'll be when he's missing to-morrow. But what do you mean to do?"

"I shall go and look on the larder and cellar," answered Dick. "But I mean to turn in to-night, and have a good sleep. Snarley never comes round to the larder again, and I'll be sure to see my bed's been upset, I shall turn in with you, if you have no objection."

"Objection!" exclaimed Messiter. "It's not likely? You're welcome to half my bed. Come in."

"Not yet."

"Why not?"

"I want to give the professor a turn. He's in his study, smoking and looking over exercises. He'll be so jolly happy with his pipe and his prog, that I won't rest in my bed if I don't make him miserable."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I don't know what I was thinking. Haven't you got a mark in the press that you used last night of November?"

"Yes."

"I thought I remembered you showing it to me. Get round, I'll put that on, and my night-shirt over my clothes."

"I say, what a shame to make a fellow get out of his warm bed," said Messiter.

"How are you better or I'll serve you as I served Snarley," answered Dick.

Messiter laughed, and did as he was asked.

The mask was a very hideous one, representing the devil with two horns, a wide mouth and a prodigious nose. Its color was black and red.

"If this don't give the professor fits, I don't know what will," said Messiter.

"We live in hope," answered Dick, coolly.

He quickly put on his night-shirt and the mask, which prevented his being recognized, and altogether he presented a very ghostly appearance.

"Wish you luck, Dick," said Messiter.

"Don't you worry yourself," answered Dick.

"If I am collared, I shan't come in here to get you into a row. I shall bolt to the lower regions. I don't want to let Snarley out, and if they see who I am, they'd catch the trick directly, and the bird would get out of the cage."

"I can fancy him," said Messiter, "biting his nails and pulling at his stumpy whiskers; I know his ways so well. His snubby nose will turn up more than ever. You know how he says, 'You boys! you boys, there! less noise, if you please.' Oh! it's grand to think that he's coopered up in the black hole. I shall love you forever, Dick, for that."

"Shut up now, and keep your ecstacy for another time," answered Dick. "I've got work in hand, and I'm off to do it. I wish I had not eaten so much of that chicken and stuff, though; I'm gorged, and feel too lazy for practical joking!"

"Have a try; you're sure to pull it off: you always do," said Messiter.

"I'll go in a good up," answered Dick, shaking his friend's outstretched hand; "and it won't be my fault if I come to grief."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. SIMCOX IS PUZZLED.

DICK wished Messiter good-night, in case he was not able to come back as he intended, and went along the passage to Mr. Simcox's study. The master was still at work, and Dick watched him through the half-open door for a while.

"Three more to do," he said, as he put down an exercise; "and then I shall be able to retire to my well-earned rest. The fourth-form boys are improving; so is this brandy and water. Each glass I take seems better than the other. Ha, ha! If Snarley only knew there was brandy and water going on, he would not have gone to bed so soon. Snarley's got a nose for anything good. I fancy he enjoyed his trip after those boys to Dieppe. The rascals! That boy Lighthouse is a perfect fiend!"

"Take care what you say," said Dick, in a sepulchral voice in the passage.

He darted under the hall table as soon as he had heard this, and was out of sight.

"Dear me, what was that? It's very odd," exclaimed Mr. Simcox.

He got up and looked with the light outside the door, but, seeing nothing, returned to his seat at the study table.

"I could have sworn I heard somebody," exclaimed he. "Perhaps it's the wind; these houses are very badly built, and we are getting into winter. Yes, I repeat that Lighthouse is a bad boy. He is the sort of lad that breaks his mother's heart and brings his father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. I'm glad he isn't my son."

"So am I," exclaimed a voice outside.

Bless me! cried Mr. Simcox. "There must be some one outside, or else it is the echo of my voice. I must cure myself of the habit of speaking aloud when I'm alone."

"The sooner the better," said Dick.

"There it is again! Some one spoke; I'm sure I heard a voice."

He got up a second time, and made an exploration of the hall and passage.

Dick no sooner saw his back turned, as he went down the passage with the candle in his hand, than he slipped into the study and sat in the professor's arm-chair.

Mr. Simcox returned, considerably puzzled.

"No one there," he said, still indulging in his favorite habit of speaking aloud.

"What a queer thing!" he said, looking at his watch. "I'm sure I heard a voice, and yet no one there. It's very odd, indeed."

On Dick, who looked most ghostly in his hideous mask and white shirt.

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!" gasped the professor, as he saw the mask.

"What a queer thing!" he said, looking at his watch. "I'm sure I heard a voice, and yet no one there. It's very odd, indeed."

"Get rid of Snarley," continued Dick.

"I will! I will!" answered the schoolmaster, half laughing and half angry.

"I'll be glad to see you again, Dick," said Messiter, as he went out.

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He did not like to go and wander about the house by himself.

His wife had gone to bed, so he drank more brandy, and at last fell asleep on the hearthrug, where he remained till morning.

It was five o'clock when he awoke, and he crawled, shivering with cold, up stairs, and crept into his wife's bed without waking her.

This was the most clever and judicious thing he had done for some time.

For had Mrs. Simcox known all about his excess, and his nap on the hearthrug, the probability is he would not hear the last of it for some time to come.

When Dick heard the house quiet, he stole up and got into Messiter's bed, making him laugh heartily at what had taken place.

In the morning, he woke as soon as the school-bell rang with its dismal clatter, and dressing himself, went to the lower part of the house.

He had some difficulty in getting past the kitchen, but the cook was engaged in lighting the fire, and he gained the larder without being observed.

There were some old butter-tubs piled up in a corner, and he found a nest behind them.

His position was irksome enough, and, after being there for some time, he thought he would rather exchange places with Mr. Snarley.

"At least," he said to himself, "Snarley has got some straw to lie upon. This won't do; I must hook it."

The voice of the milkman was heard at the area, and he knew it was eight o'clock.

"I'll get out of this," he said.

Getting up, and emerging from his shelter, he helped himself to some cold veal, and seeing the hole communicating with the cellar, couldn't resist the temptation of speaking once more to the usher.

"I say, sir!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" answered Mr. Snarley. "Thank goodness some one has come! My bones ache, and I am half beside myself."

"You will be wholly so, before long," answered Dick.

"Is it you, Lighthouse?" exclaimed Mr. Snarley. "Be a good boy, and let me out."

"But, I say, sir!" said Dick, with a chuckle.

"What?" asked Snarley.

"Have you caught that rat?"

"Rat be—!" cried Mr. Snarley, losing his temper, and adding:

"No, I don't mean to be cross; but it is really enough to try a man's temper to be shut up here like this. Let me out, Dick, there's a good boy."

"Next week," answered Dick. "There you are, and there you'll stop, as far as I'm concerned. I'm going into the town now to enjoy myself. I've got a friend who's staying at the 'Bedford,' and we'll drink your health, and success to your rat-catching. Good-bye, sir! Don't be too hard on the rats."

He heard Mr. Snarley grate his teeth with rage, and slipped out of the larder, up the area steps, and gained the street, up which he walked, towards the Old Steyne.

When he said he had a friend staying at the Bedford Hotel, he did not exaggerate, for he had received a letter from his sister a short time back, in which she announced two items of news.

The first was, that Lieutenant Harry Smart, of Her Majesty's Navy, was about to visit Brighton, and would be found, for some time to come, at the "Bedford."

The second was, that Agnes—his youngest sister—was coming to school at Brighton, and would be living at Kemp Town, near Mr. Simcox's.

Lieutenant Smart was a young man with a tolerably good income and some interest at the Admiralty, but he could not always get a ship. The vessel in which he had sailed had been paid off, and he was enjoying a cruise on shore.

The lieutenant had paid several visits to the rectory, and, with the sharpness of a boy of his age, Dick fancied that he was paying attention to his sister.

Nor was he mistaken.

"If he's spooney on Emily," thought Dick, "he'll be glad enough to be civil to me."

So he went boldly to the Bedford Hotel, and asked for Lieutenant Smart.

"I mustn't look down on my luck," said he to himself. "These naval men give themselves airs, and he'll look upon me as a milksop if I show the white feather."

True to his early training, Mr. Smart was an early riser and was at breakfast as Dick was ushered into his room.

"Oh! how do you do?" he exclaimed. "Sit down, Master Dick, I meant to call upon you to-day."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick, "but I'm a bit of a busy body, and I don't like to trouble you. I'll write to you, or, when you have occasion to write to me, I'll answer."

"Thank you for putting me right," said the lieutenant; "and to what fortunate circumstances am I indebted for the honor of this visit, Dick?"

"I've had a bit of a kick-up at our school, and thought it would be better for my health if I left the authorities to themselves for a little while."

"Indeed!"

"It's nothing much; you need not interest yourself about it," added Dick.

"How did you know I was here?" asked Harry Smart.

"Give me some breakfast, and I'll talk with you. I don't like to see you, or Emily shall never speak to you again."

"I don't like to see you, or Emily shall never speak to you again," said Dick, "but I'll be glad to see you again, Dick," said Messiter, as he went out.

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prawn, you fancy you're eating ten shrimps, and they're not half the bother to peel. I'll start with the prawns decidedly, and you can order me a fried sole and some cocoa."

The lieutenant did so, and contrived to get Dick into conversation by degrees.

He learned how he had been over to Dieppe with Messiter, and how Mr. Snarley had come for him, and subsequently incarcerated him in the black hole.

He heard how he had frightened the worthy pedagogue with his ghost trick, and how he had shut up the usher in the cellar.

"You ought to go to sea, my boy," said the lieutenant; "you're just cut out for a seafaring life. You'd get some of the liveliness knocked out of you with the rope's end, I'm thinking."

"Don't you make any mistake," answered Dick; "I'm too wide awake to go to sea, either in the merchant service or Her Majesty's, though I believe the former is better than the latter."

"Thank you for the compliment," said Smart.

"I didn't mean anything personal," remarked Dick, "though I believe you are a favorable specimen of the officers of the Royal Navy. Why don't you wear your uniform and let everybody know you're R. N.? You would get such a lot of credit in Brighton."

"You impudent young whelp!" exclaimed the lieutenant; "I'll take you back to your school and stand by while they flog you, if you are not more civil."

"Just like you fellows," answered Dick, putting his legs on a chair. "I always said the navy brutalized men."

"If you came here to abuse me and take possession of my rooms, I'll vacate them in your favor."

"Please yourself, my dear boy," replied Dick. "I'm very jolly if you won't bully me. Shy the Times over here, will you. I want to look at the Police Intelligence."

"You're a cool fish," said Lieutenant Smart, who could not help smiling; "but I was just the same at your age."

"Was you?" said Dick. "Then you must have been a highly interesting pup. But look here, old boy, I don't want to have a row with you. Make me jolly. I don't understand segars and sodas and brandies yet, but I like a drive. The governor trots you about when you come to Ingarstone. Return the civility, or I'll crab you with Emily."

"I'll do anything you like," answered the lieutenant. "If you'll only condescend to tell me what you mean to do. You can't expect me to keep you away from school altogether."

"Certainly not. Under exceptional circumstances I have taken a day's holiday. All I want you to do is to entertain me to-day. Take me about, give me a good dinner and a glass of wine, and try and make me forget my troubles."

"And then?"

"Well, then, you must go to Harrow House School and say, that as a friend of the family, you protest against my being shut up in a dark, stifling cellar, and you think that I have been sufficiently punished by being caged."

"If the master does not see it?" continued the lieutenant.

"Threaten him with a summons at the Town Hall and exposure for ill-treating me; the law will let you do that. And—Harry—oh! you can get me out of the scrape if you like. There are lots of ways. Old Simcox is an old woman, and a man can twist him around his finger."

"Very well," rejoined Mr. Smart. "I'll do what I can for you. You will find a Robinson Crusoe on the seaboard. Read that, and give me the paper. It is too early to go on the beach. I've got a cave there."

A cave! said Dick.

"Yes; I rent it. A sort of a cavern in the sea wall, with a door. My friends and I smoke and have beer there. It's awfully jolly."

The lieutenant rather liked Dick, who found, by conversing with him, that he was intelligent and agreeable, though he was somewhat off-hand.

About seven they strolled towards the beach, and Dick wondered how Mr. Snarley was, and what Mr. Simcox thought of the situation.

Mr. Simcox was puzzled.

But we must reserve his speculations, and what happened at the Harrow House, for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE CAVE.

THE cave Lieutenant Smart had spoken about to Dick, and which he was taking him to visit, was a sort of vault in the sea wall, a little below the "Bedford."

This he rented by the month, and kept in it some chairs, a table, a box of cigars, and some bottled beer and spirits, for the friends whom he asked to come in and spend an hour or two with him.

It was a curious fancy of having a vault of his own, when he could have had a comfortable room anywhere.

But naval men are peculiar, and it suited the rollicking tastes of the thoroughly good-hearted sailor to have a cave all to himself, where he could do as he liked, and neither landlord nor landlady could interfere with him.

At last, when the wind blew and the waves ran high, the lieutenant would go to the cave, and would sit there for hours, smoking and drinking, and thinking of his friends and of his school.

When Dick and the lieutenant were in the cave, they would sit at the table, and the lieutenant would tell him of his adventures, and Dick would tell him of his school.

One day, when the lieutenant was in the cave, he was told by a young gentleman named Nipper, who was a friend of his, that he had been to the school, and that he had seen Mr. Snarley.

"What a queer thing!" said the lieutenant, "I'm sure I heard a voice, and yet no one there. It's very odd, indeed."

"I'll be glad to see you again, Dick," said Messiter, as he went out.

"I'll be glad to see you again, Dick," said Messiter, as he went out.

"A gloomy-looking den, too," answered Dick; "had you not better light the gas?"

He said this jestingly, and was surprised to see Smart strike a fusee, and actually light four burners of a chandelier, which gave an excellent light.

"Don't you be in too much of a hurry, young Vulgar Fractions!" exclaimed the lieutenant. "At a vast outlay I had the gas laid on, which reminds me that I have the unpaid bill at this moment in my pocket. This is not the Temple of Vesta, and the fire cannot always be kept burning, though if we knew you were coming, we would have had the Saturn illuminated in your honor."

"Don't chaff, Harry. I'm not in humor for it, old boy," said Dick.

"It's my nature. 'What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh.' I once chaffed a nigger in Otaheiti to such an extent that he immediately went and drowned himself, and his melancholy example was followed by his whole family; but as niggers are plentiful in those parts, they were not missed, and the king of the country gave me a testimonial."

"What a crammer!" Dick observed, laughing.

"It's a fact," answered the lieutenant, solemnly; "and now," he added, "what will your youthful mind delight in, in the way of drink? Some beer? I thought so. Look in the box on the left. No, not that one, stupid, that's champagne! Here's an intelligent animal from the schoolastic world, who don't know a drop of champagne from a barrel of beer."

"Yes, sir," said Dick, in a low voice.

The box was drawn, the door was shut, and the gas lamp lit.

"I must get out of this den," said Dick, looking at his watch. "I have a ship to catch, and I must be off."

"What's this?" asked the professor, as his foot kicked against something hard.

"I suppose I'll have to go back again," Dick said, with a sigh.

"And be put in that black hole; but that won't do. I must get you out of that; still, it's a good thing to stick to your ship, even if the skipper is a rank bad un; I must get to the windward of him somehow. I've got an idea in my mind."

"What is it?"

"I'll go to-night, about tea-time, and say I have been sent to inquire for you by your father; then they will say you are in the cellar, and I will insist upon being taken down to it at once. So I shall see Snarley come out, and pretend to be very indignant at you being minus. It will be a rare lark. I know I shall laugh till my sides ache; Snarley's appearance is sure to give me fits."

"I'll sleep here to-night with your permission," said Dick.

"Have a room at the hotel."

"No, thank you, they might find me out; I have been away from one hotel, and it makes one look suspicious. This cave is just the place for me. I shall be as safe as a lion in a trap, and I shall be right enough."

"Very well. But I want to get this Snarley down here," answered Smart, his eyes twinkling with anticpation.

"That would be splendid. How can we do it though?"

"Leave it to me. I've got a dodge," said the lieutenant.

Dick did not ask any questions.

After a little more conversation, and another bottle of beer, they strolled about the Parade and on the West Pier.

After this they went into the hotel to dinner, which was provided in sumptuous style, and Dick enjoyed himself immensely.

"This is better than hot and fat," he said, with his mouth half full of turkey and sausage.

"What's that?" asked his friend.

"Why, we generally have mutton at Simcox's, and he asks us, 'Hot and fat for you, hot and fat?' meaning will we have hot meat or cold, and have it cut lean or fat, for we are not allowed to waste anything; we must eat all on our plates."

"You may do what you like here. So pitch in and take a cargo for a long voyage."

The dinner over, the lieutenant looked at his watch.

"Just time for a weed," he said, "and then I must be off. I wouldn't miss seeing Snarley come out of that hole for anything."

At length he started and traveled in a cab to Harrow House, Kemp Town, and knocked at the door of Mr. Simcox's establishment for young gentlemen.

The principal received him, and, after a short conversation, he disappeared.

"I sincerely trust that nothing of an unpleasant nature has happened to him. He was a most agreeable man. Can you inform me if you have heard of any of the town of any one being found drowned?"

"Can't say I have," answered Smart. "But it seems to me that I have not yet explained the business I have come upon."

"You have not, although if you are desirous of placing one or more sons at my establishment, I shall be glad to oblige you."

"Ah! true; forgive me, sir. It is a brother, I presume."

"No; it isn't."

"Or a cousin? Ah! I perceive—a dear, yet distant

relation, presumably an orphan. How Mrs. Simcox will cherish the poor friendless creature!"

"You run on so fast, Mr. Greek and Latin," said the lieutenant, "that I can't get an oar in edgeways. I've come here to see Dick Lightheart. His father is anxious about him, and you will oblige me by sending him in here."

"I must tell you about that boy, sir!" exclaimed the professor, becoming grave, and he told his visitor the whole story of his running away, and that he was in the back hole. "But," he added, "as the time is nearly up, we may as well let him out. I will let him off the remainder of his sentence, and say that my clemency is due to your intercession."

"Is that how you treat the poor little orphans your wife is so fond of?" asked Smart; but the professor pretended not to hear him, and they went down stairs together, the lieutenant insisting upon attending at Dick's restoration to liberty.

"I do believe that Mr. Snarley has the key," exclaimed Mr. Simcox, as they stood outside the heavy, ominous-looking door.

"Send for a locksmith," suggested Smart.

"What's this?" asked the professor, as his foot kicked against something hard.

It was the key, which Dick had dropped in the passage.

"I hope the hardened boy will show some signs of penitence," observed the master, as he put the key in the lock.

Behind him stood a servant with a light, which enabled them both to see the figure of Mr. Snarley emerge slowly from a dark corner as the door fell back.

"Why, what is this?" said the professor, rubbing his eyes. "Mr. Snarley! Can I believe the evidence of my senses?"

The usher made signs to the effect that he was too exhausted to speak, and wanted something to eat and drink.

Putting his arm in that of the usher, the professor supported him in this way to the kitchen, where he had a chair given him, and was supplied with a jug of ale.

"How did you get in there, my dear sir?" asked the professor.

"It was the cunning of that artful boy," answered the usher, speaking slowly; "when I went to give him his bread and water last night, he said there was a rat in the straw. I went to kill it; he popped out and made me a prisoner."

"What impudence!"

"How did you like it?" asked the lieutenant.

"Horrible!" answered Snarley.

"If it was so to you, how much more so must it be to a mere boy?" continued Smart. "You have a good lesson, and it serves you right, and if Mr. Simcox does not promise me that place shall never be used again for the same purpose, I will expose him in the newspapers."

"Well, on consideration, I will give this punishment. Mr. Snarley reports badly of the system, and it shall be discontinued."

"Now, where is the boy?"

"Ah! where indeed?" answered Simcox.

"Gone again?" asked Snarley.

"We have seen nothing of him; he must have run away a second time."

"It will be best for you to find him," said the lieutenant, "as his friends are very anxious about him; but I dare say he will be found somewhere in a short time, and I will not write to his father until to-morrow evening, when I will come up and see you again. Good-night. I hope you liked your quarters, Mr. Snarley. By the way, if I should by any chance run up against Dick, shall I tell him you caught that rat?"

"No, sir, I did not catch it; but I believe I can smell a rat now," replied Mr. Snarley, with dignity.

"What do you mean?"

"It's my impression you know where the boy is, and have come up here to gloat over me and my sufferings."

"I gloat over you?" cried the lieutenant. "In the first place I don't know how to gloat; if I did, I shouldn't over a contemptible gerund-grinder and boy slave driver. Don't say a word to me, sir, or I shall be tempted to spoil the beauty of your figure-head, and knock you into the middle of next week."

"The law will protect me from your violence," replied Snarley, emboldened by the beer he had imbibed.

"I have punched a man's head, and been fined forty shillings for doing it, at Portsmouth, once when I had come ashore from a cruise; but I considered it a cheap luxury at the price."

"Sir, I must request you to leave my kitchen and my house. This riotous behavior is unseemly," observed Mr. Simcox.

"Oh! And you want to have a go in at me too?" said the lieutenant. "Well, I'll be off; but I must have a parting shot at that old mummy in the chair."

Seeing a bag of flour on the dresser, he took it up and threw it at Mr. Snarley.

It struck him on the head; the paper broke, and the flour fell in a whole cascade all over him.

"This is an outrage, sir!" said Mr. Simcox, seizing the lieutenant by the arm.

"Don't touch me, old Fireworks!" cried the fiery lieutenant.

There was a tub of dough standing by, and, grasping the professor by the waist, he tossed him over right into the trough, where he lay, covered and plunging. Mr. Snarley, who was waiting outside, looked on with a look of satisfaction.

Mrs. Simcox, who had been standing by, looked on with a look of horror.

His only way out of the den was by the back door, which was at the end of the passage.

on the "gerund-grinders," as he called the professor and his assistant.

When Dick heard the story, he was delighted, and said he should have liked to be there.

"But," he added, "it will make him all the more savage when I get back."

"I shall stay here some time, and you can always come to me. I'll protect you, my lad, and now suppose we go somewhere. Go to the theater and see the horsemanship? That's about your line of country, isn't it? Do boys like a circus?"

"Stunning!" said Dick. "Will you treat me to the circus?"

"Like a shot—pick up your cap and come on." They left the hotel together, and walked along the Parade, and turning up a side street, came to the building in which the horsemanship was going on.

The place was not crowded, so they got two good seats in the stalls.

There was some riding and baredback feats. Then came the Bounding Brothers of the Caucasus, and Mr. Merriman, and a sprite, who popped out of a trap in the floor in the most marvelous manner.

After that the appearance of the star of the evening was announced.

This was Miss Agatha Mountserratt, who was pronounced by all the crowned heads of Europe as the most accomplished and peerless horsewoman in the world.

At least this is what the bills said about her. She came on riding a splendid black horse, and looked a very pretty, well-made, fair-haired girl of seventeen, or thereabouts, sitting gracefully in the saddle, smiling at the jokes of the clown, while she waited for the band to begin.

The horse held itself in readiness, and she stood up on its back, bowing to the audience.

There was a crack of the whip, and the horse started suddenly. Dick said to his friend: "What's that?"

He pointed to the stage.

There was an indication that the trap up which the clown had come had not been properly fastened.

The lid hung down a little, and it was clear that if any great pressure was put upon it, it would go down.

For instance, if the horse trod on it, he would fall and perhaps break his fair rider's neck.

"What is it?" asked Smart, looking at the girl with admiration, and not paying much heed to his companion.

"The trap is down. I don't know much about stage business, though I was always very fond of theaters; yet I can see that it is dangerous. Miss What's-her-name will come to grief."

The music struck up and drowned his voice. For a moment he hesitated.

The horse and its rider, increasing their speed, approached the perilous spot.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. SNARLEY IS SOLD AGAIN.

BEING a boy of courage and ready resources, Dick did not stay to consult his friend any further. Delay was dangerous.

In a few moments the horse would be at the spot, and the accident would happen.

He could not bear the idea of such a pretty girl being carried away on a stretcher, bruised, mangled and bleeding—maimed for life, perhaps, so he determined to act at once.

Standing up in his seat, he put one foot on the railing which divided the orchestra from the stalls, and sprang right over the heads of the musicians into the circus.

"Hallo, Dick! Here, I say, what are you up to?" cried the lieutenant.

He thought he was mad.

Dick paid no attention to him, but, standing in front of the horse, waved his hand and shouted:

"Back! back! for your life!"

Miss Mountserratt saw something in Dick's earnest manner which made her feel sure all was not right.

She reigned in her steed with some difficulty, and brought him to a halt just in front of the trap. At the same moment the clown seized Dick by the arm, and said:

"What is the meaning of this, young gentleman?"

The musicians stopped, and the audience stood up to see what was going on.

"I don't know," said Dick, "but I believe I can smell a rat now."

"What do you mean?" asked the clown.

"It's my impression you know where the boy is, and have come up here to gloat over me and my sufferings."

"I gloat over you?" cried the clown. "In the first place I don't know how to gloat; if I did, I shouldn't over a contemptible gerund-grinder and boy slave driver. Don't say a word to me, sir, or I shall be tempted to spoil the beauty of your figure-head, and knock you into the middle of next week."

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"Oh! And you want to have a go in at me too?" said the lieutenant. "Well, I'll be off; but I must have a parting shot at that old mummy in the chair."

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Mrs. Simcox, who had been standing by, looked on with a look of horror.

His only way out of the den was by the back door, which was at the end of the passage.

"Polly Hopkins' wouldn't look half so well in the lads."

"Oh! I see."

At that moment Polly came in, having finished her performance, and the hall rang with applause. Up to Dick, she took his hand and kissed it gratefully.

"I can never thank you sufficiently," she said, "for your presence of mind."

"Don't say any more now," said Dick. "I am proud to make your acquaintance. I shall come and see you."

"Do, sir; ask for Hopkins at the stage-door, and he'll give orders that you are to be shown behind at once."

"Perhaps you can do something for me some day. There is no telling," said Dick; "I may run away from school and want to go into your business."

The clown shook his head.

"Better keep out of it, sir. It's little pay and hard work," said he.

The bell rang, and father and daughter had to go on again—the former to make the audience laugh, the latter to appear in a new trick act.

They took leave of Dick, and begged him to return again, and one of the officials led him around to the front, where he joined his friend. But before he parted with the pretty Polly, he had begged one kiss, which she laughingly let him take.

"So you go in for saving people's lives?" remarked the lieutenant. "You are developing, young Fractions, your character is showing itself. I'm proud of you, and I'll have an account of this in the Brighton Post to-morrow."

"She's very pretty," said Dick, abstractedly.

"In love, eh? Well, there's no knowing what folly a schoolboy may be guilty of."

"Were you never in love?"

"I'm never out of it," laughed the lieutenant. "I began when I was a naval cadet, and wanted to run away with a publican's daughter; but he found me out and gave me a good hiding with an oak plant. I thought my heart was broken, but it wasn't."

When the performance was over, they went to the cave, and Dick curled himself up in a rug.

"Are you fond of your bed?" asked Smart.

"I don't know," answered Dick. "I'm never awake long enough to know. When I get into bed, I fall asleep, and in the morning I have to turn out when the bell rings."

The lieutenant wished him good-night, and went to the Bedford.

Dick dreamt of pretty Polly, and thought that Snarley paid her some attention, whereupon he knocked him down; but he slept well nevertheless, and was at the hotel for breakfast at eight.

The lieutenant thought all day long how he could play some trick on Snarley.

"I've got it," he said, at last.

"What?" asked Dick.

"Never mind," was the answer. "You stop here, my young and intelligent friend, and you shall see what you shall see."

Dick sat down in the cave, and the lieutenant went away.

In an hour's time he returned with Mr. Snarley, whom, to Dick's intense dismay, he introduced to the cave.

"I have been to Harrow House," he said, "and told them there that I met you this morning, and Mr. Snarley has come with me to take you."

Dick groaned; but a wink from Harry Smart gave him to understand that there was something going on which he did not comprehend.

"Misguided boy!" said Mr. Snarley, with a pious snuffle. "This gentleman has shown that he is your friend by coming to us and giving you up; prepare to accompany me to Harrow House."

"Not yet," said Smart; you must have a social glass first, Mr. Snarley. We have to make up our little quarrel of yesterday."

"It is forgotten, sir," replied the usher; "you covered me with flour, but you have promised me another seat, and I am satisfied; but this black sheep—"

"I say, Mr. Snarley, don't you call me names. If you throw bricks, so can I!"

"The ways of the world," said Mr. Snarley, "I will drink the cup of friendship with you."

"Thank you," said Smart.

"Now, Mr. Snarley, I have a little red powder he had obtained from a friend of his, and who had told him that it would, if mixed with a spirit, produce drunkenness in ten minutes."

"Mix it with the mixture, and with a sigh of satisfaction, held out the glass for more."

"What, another dose? You're going it, old Beat-the-boys. But I like gin, old Spabbin, and here's your health," said the lieutenant.

Mr. Snarley sat down, and this time sipped his rum slowly.

"Not often that I indulge, but we have scrip-ple," said Dick, "saying that it is a poor heart that can't resist wine. Wine was given to glad the heart of man."

"Man is repenting," said Snarley.

"You are to receive a free pardon from the governor for you, Dick," said Smart.

"And on the understanding that you be a good boy in future, the past is to be forgotten."

"I have," said Dick, "a great deal to say to you."

"I have," said Smart, "a great deal to say to you."

"In my youth I could dance a sailor's hornpipe. Push aside the table, and I will oblige you with an attempt to do so once more. Can you whistle the tune?"

"I've got a fiddle in the cupboard, and I can play it on that."

"Good again," answered Mr. Snarley, smiling.

The table was pushed on one side and the violin produced.

Mr. Snarley began to dance and indulged in such serious contortions that the spectators were choked with laughter.

This made the rum get into his head, and presently he sank down on the floor insensible.

"He's tight," said Dick.

"Tight as a fly; and so would you be if you had taken what he has. I've drugged him," answered the lieutenant.

"What are you going to do with him?"

"You don't suppose I brought him here for nothing, do you? Unfasten that bundle. It contains a complete clown's dress, which I bought this morning at a costumer's. I mean to dress him in it, and send him home, like an ass as he is. I've got something that will revive him, though it won't make him sober."

"What a lark," laughed Dick, unfastening the bundle.

The lieutenant prepared some paint to ornament the usher's cheeks with, and arranged a wig which he had obtained expressly for him.

Meanwhile the unfortunate Mr. Snarley was wholly unconscious of what was going on.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRICT DISCIPLINE.

WHEN Mr. Snarley was rendered quite incapable of protecting himself, or knowing what was going on, the lieutenant proceeded to dress him in the gay theatrical dress he had procured for the occasion.

The clown's wig fitted him to perfection.

They powdered his face, and put a few streaks of paint on it, and then he was ready to go home.

"I think he'll do," said the lieutenant, looking admiringly at his work.

"Just another dab on the nose," suggested Dick.

The dab was applied, and the unfortunate usher pronounced perfect.

"Go and bring two flies," commenced the lieutenant, "and I will apply the restorative. I only want him to be fuddled; if he is quite stupid, there will be no fun."

Dick went out of the cave, and his friend gave Mr. Snarley a draught which brought him to himself.

He did not know what had been done to him; but he had a vague idea that he ought to go home.

"So you shall; lean on my arm," said the lieutenant.

"And the boy?" said Mr. Snarley.

"Will come with us? Leave it all to me. Am I not your friend?"

"You are," replied Snarley, pressing his hand. "I know it; I feel it. And this night is one of the proudest passages in my life. Lead on, sir, I will follow you."

They met Dick at the entrance to the cave, and he supported Mr. Snarley at the other side.

In this way they proceeded to the cliff, where the flies were waiting.

Mr. Snarley was handed into one, and though the light was imperfect, the flymen could not help laughing.

"Is there anything ridiculous about me?" asked Mr. Snarley.

"Nothing, I hope," replied Dick.

"Why then are those men indulging in vulgar laughter?"

"It is their way," said the lieutenant, as they helped him into a fly. "We will follow you, sir. You must go first, and prepare Mr. Simcox for our arrival."

Mr. Snarley's head was in such a confused state that he scarcely knew what he was doing.

His chief idea was that he wanted to go home and get to bed.

So the flies started, and quickly came to Harrow House.

That in which the lieutenant and Dick were, stopped short of the school, but Mr. Snarley was driven boldly on.

The usher entered, and Mr. Snarley entered, where the latter and his wife were.

They had just finished supper, and their surprise at beholding the apparition that burst upon them may be easily imagined.

"Who are you, sir? How dare you intrude upon me at this hour?" said the professor, who did not know him in the least.

"Yes, how dare you?" echoed Mrs. Simcox, with equal indignation.

"What, not know its own Snarley—its favorite usher?" said that gentleman, in maudlin tone.

"Are you Mr. Snarley, and in this guise? Why, your gait is unsteady; your breath smells most alarmingly of rum. It is the voice of Snarley, but it has the appearance of a clown."

"Giv'sh some wine," said the usher, seizing the decanter of sherry and helping himself.

"Mr. Snarley, you shall not," said the professor, "you forget yourself, sir!"

"Fal, la, la; fal, la, la!" said Mr. Snarley.

"What is the meaning of this extraordinary conduct?" said Mr. Simcox, in perplexity.

"Fal, la, la. It's a way we have in the army."

"Mr. Snarley!"

"It's a way we have in the navy. Fal, la, la. Jolly fellows navy men."

"Bother the navy," cried Mr. Simcox.

"Navy is our great safeguard," said Mr. Snarley.

"Mr. Snarley!"

"Sir, to you."

"This behavior is most reprehensible."

"It is all right, sir. It's only a way we have in good company. Fal, la, la. 'What jolly dogs are we.'"

Mr. Snarley began to gracefully pirouette in front of the window, and eventually did a breakdown in the most approved burlesque style.

Mrs. Simcox had a heart attack; she laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks.

Not so her husband.

He was furious, and pursued Mr. Snarley round the room, trying to catch him; but the usher dived under his arms, and reappeared in another part of the room, throwing out his huge arm, with a "Fal, la, la, fal, la, la, what jolly dogs are we!"

Dick and the lieutenant had mounted the railings outside, and were able to peer into the room, through the corner of the window, which was not quite hidden by the blind, and they enjoyed the spectacle immensely.

At length Mr. Snarley missed his footing, lost his balance, and fell back on the table, which was one of two leaves.

As he fell in the center the screws gave way, the two halves tilted, and all the supper things fell with a crash upon the unhappy man, who lay in the midst of cold meat, pickles, bread, and a fine dry dinner sherry at thirty-six the dozen.

"Mr. Snarley, get up, sir. Are you hurt? How do you feel now?" said the professor shaking him.

"I feel happy, sir," answered Mr. Snarley, smiling blandly. "I feel as if some one had died and left me a boarding-school, replete with pupils, furniture, and all the stock-in-trade of a successful seminary. It has always been my dream. Let me sink calmly to my rest. Adieu! In the language of the poets, sir, I solemnly, adieu, sir! adieu, Samivel! The time has come, but no matter."

His eyes closed, and he began to snore loudly.

Ring the bell for the servants, who were as much surprised as anyone else at the usher's condition, it was with the utmost difficulty that they got him to bed.

When the scene was over, Dick and the lieutenant returned to their hotel, and laughed heartily over the adventure.

"And now, Dick, what is your little game?" asked Lieutenant Smart.

"I shall go home to-morrow."

"Home?"

"Yes," said Dick, "and see if I can't make some arrangement with the governor to go somewhere else."

"Do you know what he'll do?"

"No."

"Of course I cannot speak with certainty," continued the lieutenant. "But from my knowledge of your father's character, I will bet a pound to a pinch of snuff that he sends you back again."

"If he does I suppose I must go," said Dick, "though I am determined I won't stop long at Simcox's. I hate the place. A public school is the place for me."

"And Mr. Lighthouse dislikes them very much. I have heard him say so. However, take your chance."

They went to bed, and Dick, in pursuance of his plan, borrowed some money from his friend to pay his fare to Hayward's Heath.

He thanked him very much for his kindness, which he declared he should never forget.

They shook hands at the station and parted, for some time to come, as the lieutenant went to Portsmouth in a few days, and they were wide as the poles asunder.

Dick could not help feeling a little nervous as he walked over to Ingarstone, and neared the rectory.

Looking into the study window he saw his father engaged in writing; and thinking it best to take the bull by the horns at once, he walked in.

"Oh, it's you sir," said his father, lying down his pen. "Where have you been?"

"Been, father?" replied Dick.

"Yes, been, sir! I have received a letter from Mr. Simcox, detailing your conduct, and saying that you had absented yourself from his control."

"I have been staying at the 'Bedford' with Lieutenant Smart."

"A nice companion, upon my word. Well, what are you here for?"

"Because I don't like Simcox's."

"As a rule boys generally dislike their schools," said the Rev. Septimus Lighthouse. "But I'll tell you one thing, you will have to like it; expect no exemption from me. I am a believer in strict discipline, especially for wayward boys like you. I shall have your idleness punished, and I will take you back myself, at once."

"Let me have some dinner first," said Dick.

"Well, I have no objections to that. Go and see your mother and sisters; at three o'clock we will start."

Dick, looking rather crestfallen, left the study, disappointed at being so coldly received by his father, but his good sense told him that he deserved the reception he had met with.

Mrs. Lighthouse was delighted to see him, as were his sisters, and when he told them some of his adventures they could not help laughing heartily.

"Your sister Emily is going to school," said his mother.

"Indeed. Where?"

"At Brighton. Miss Bodmin, our governess, has taken a school, which, oddly enough, is at the back of Mr. Simcox's house; your playgrounds will join one another."

"And we can talk over the wall, Dick," said Emily.

"What fun," said Dick.

"Miss Bodmin is a good creature," answered Mrs. Lighthouse, "and I hope she will succeed in her venture. Emily is to be a schoolmistress, and perhaps, Agnes will go afterwards. I would not trust

[illegible]

"Yes, mum; but touching the fat?"

"Be silent, sir? Really, Philip," she added, addressing her brother, "this boy is shocking!"

"Oh, I'm a treat, mum. I'll bet you didn't bargain for a chap like me. I'm Sussex all over. Sally, more 'taters, and pick 'em out crummy, like yourself."

The servant smiled, and handed him the vegetables.

"What shall I do? My ears ache already. He is excruciating!" cried Miss Priscilla.

"Let him alone, dear. We will soon teach him better manners," observed Mr. Markwell.

"I for one protest against such companionship being thrust upon me," said the Honorable Mr. Brabazon.

"And so do I," said Lawless.

"Ain't I genteel enough?" asked Dick.

"Not by a long way, eh? Well, I'll try to cut a bit finer," said Dick, adding, "Governor, I'll trouble you. Birds is fine now, and I do dearly love a pheasant. Bit of the breast and a wing will do me first-rate, and don't forget the bread sauce. My 'it makes one's month water."

"He hasn't even washed his hands or brushed his hair," said Miss Priscilla.

"Please, mum, it's a wig," said Dick.

"What's a wig?" said Miss Priscilla, nervously.

"My thatch, mum. I had a fever, and have worn a wig ever since. Don't you like 'em, mum?"

"Horrors upon horrors accumulate! Fancy a boy with a wig! Fancy anybody being so base as to wear other people's hair!" cried Miss Priscilla.

"Suppose you've got none, or very little of your own, mum?" said Dick.

"Don't address me in that way!"

"Beg pardon, mum; didn't say you wore a wig. Do you?"

"Do I?" Oh, this insolence! Vulgar little boy, know that I do not wear a wig, and would scorn to do such a thing!"

Here Miss Priscilla looked fondly at the Honorable Mr. Brabazon, who was an especial favorite of hers, and who she fancied in return rather liked her.

"Oh, my! ain't she making eyes at Brab?" said Dick, winking at Sarah, the house-maid, who was waiting at the table.

Sarah, being human, could stand no more; she rushed out into the passage and leaned against the table, fairly roaring.

"The impudence of that girl," said Miss Priscilla.

"Ain't it awful vulgar in a genteel family, mum?" said Dick.

"I'll speak to her, that I will. I'll give her notice," answered Miss Priscilla.

"My dear, be patient," said Mr. Markwell.

"I cannot bear it, Philip."

"Go in and win, mum," said Dick.

Miss Priscilla arose.

Dick grasped the string tightly with his left hand.

He knew the catastrophe must come as soon as she moved any distance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S NEPHEW.

Miss PRISCILLA moved with dignity towards the door. Dick felt a pull at the string and gave a jerk. Off came the wig.

Miss Priscilla stood for a moment wigless, the few hairs she had standing out in bold relief on her yellow-looking head, and her glorious curls were lying at her feet.

She gave a shriek—a piercing shriek of agony, and rushed from the room in a fainting condition.

Dick ran forward, picked up the wig and took out the fish-hook, which he replaced in his pocket without being observed.

"Give me that—that thing," said Mr. Markwell, snatching it from Dick's hand.

And he followed his sister.

"That's neat," observed Dick, sitting down.

"Don't address yourself to me. I am a gentleman!" said the Honorable Mr. Brabazon.

"Your gentility will kill you if you don't look out," answered Dick. "But don't cut up rough, Brabazon, pass the bird."

"I shall do nothing of the sort, sir!"

"Please yourself. You'd rather punch my head, wouldn't you!—only it's not genteel," answered Dick.

"You are to stay here, I shall go."

"I shan't miss you, and I dare say we shall not have to put the shutters up," Dick said with his usual coolness.

Lawless drew his chair near the fire, as did the other servants, and they looked at their place.

The door opened, and Mr. Markwell entered, and superintended their studies.

The servants cleared the dinner things away, and Dick took up a book.

Just then there was a knock at the door, and a gentleman was announced.

"Lieutenant Smart," said the servant, "to see Mr. Markwell."

"What time is it?" asked Mr. Markwell.

"About half-past ten," he said, "I did not expect to see you out the old shop?"

"I thought I would," said Dick, "I thought I would."

"I can't," answered Dick. "I'm lame of one leg, and can't get in and out without a ladder, and this morning my servant is not with me."

is one of the senior lords of the admiralty, and is trying to get me a ship."

Dick whistled.

"That's how the wind blows, is it?" he said. "I thought so."

"Lieutenant Smart went up to Brabazon and shook hands with him, as he did with the other pupils, to whom he seemed to be well known. It was not his first visit to Mr. Markwell's."

"Do you know that cad?" said Brabazon, in a tone of disgust, pointing to Dick.

"Cad!" repeated the lieutenant, in amazement. "He's one of my cousins, and as nice and gentlemanly a fellow as ever breathed."

"We don't think so."

"How long has he been here?"

"An hour or two, and that's too long," answered Lawless.

"There must be some mistake, which I can put right. Here, Dick, I want to speak to you," exclaimed the lieutenant.

Dick approached.

"You've been up to your tricks, you young rascal," continued Lieutenant Smart. "Admit it, now, or I'll never speak to you again. Brabazon says you are not nice. Tell us all about it. Out with it—no nonsense."

"I dare say Mr. Brabazon will find out for himself in time," replied Dick.

"That won't do. Tell us your motives for mystifying them," persisted the lieutenant.

"The fact is, Brabazon annoyed me by his gentility, and all that sort of thing, and I thought I would have a little fun with him. I don't want to be on unfriendly terms with any one."

"Then you're not a cad?" said Brabazon.

"I hope not. I've only been fogging you, and now Smart has let the cat out of the bag, it's no use keeping up the joke."

They all laughed, and soon got into good temper.

The lieutenant could not stop.

He was on his way to London, and had only paid them a passing visit.

What he had said about Dick put him on a very good footing with his companions.

Mr. Markwell did not suspect his share in unwigging Miss Priscilla.

Every one thought it had been insecurely fastened, though she herself had a different opinion; but she said nothing, and had the moral courage to come into the room at tea-time as if nothing had happened, though she looked coldly upon Dick.

Mr. Markwell gave him some books, and being a thoroughly good scholar himself, soon found out what he knew, and what he ought to be taught.

Throwing off the vulgar behavior he had assumed, Dick soon became a favorite, and so keenly did the young gentlemen feel the satire that he had directed against their gentility, that he heard nothing more about taking the whole of the pavement, pushing people into the street, and similar nonsense.

Each boy had a bed-room to himself, and Dick slept, in one next door to Mr. Markwell.

In the night he got up to execute a little scheme that he had concocted.

With the utmost care and gentleness he abstracted from the drawers and cupboards every pair of trousers and everything in the shape of coat and hat, belonging to his tutor.

These he put into a cupboard in his own room, and locked the door.

He had previously ascertained that Mr. Markwell did not come down to breakfast till ten o'clock, leaving his pupils to get up their lessons as they liked before that hour.

Indeed, there was not much work done at Mr. Markwell's.

If a boy chose to work, he did so; if he did not, he let it alone.

The next morning Dick was up early and went out for a walk, going to a livery stable, and looking at some traps for hire.

At a hair-dresser's he bought a beard, whiskers and mustache, and wrapped in his great coat, looked quite a different personage from what he had done previously.

He hired a phaeton for two hours, and getting in, drove up to Mr. Markwell's exactly at half-past ten.

Sarah opened the door, but did not know Dick at all.

"Is Mr. Markwell in?" he asked.

"Just getting up, sir. I hear the bell ringing now for the hot water. Who shall I say?" asked Sarah.

"Tell him an aide-de-camp of the commander-in-chief is here, and wishes to speak to him about placing his nephew under his charge," said Dick.

"Yes, sir."

Sarah went up to Mr. Markwell's room, and knocked at the door.

"Here's a gentleman, sir," she said.

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Markwell.

"Something to do with the commander-in-chief, sir, and wants to place his nephew with you."

"Ask him inside; and Sarah, where the deuce have all my things got to?"

"What things, sir?"

"Trousers and coats, and bless me, I can't find a boot!"

"Oh! sir," said Sarah, "I know nothing about trousers."

"Send Mr. Lawless to me, then, and make haste," said the bewildered Mr. Markwell.

Sarah went away giggling, and told Lawless the master wanted him.

Lawless went to the door and asked Dick to step in.

"I can't," answered Dick. "I'm lame of one leg, and can't get in and out without a ladder, and this morning my servant is not with me."

"Tell your master to be quick and come out here, as time presses."

"He may miss a valuable opportunity of acquiring a good connection."

Sarah went to Mr. Markwell's door and told him all this, at which his impatience increased wonderfully.

When Lawless arrived he explained the predicament in which he was placed, and they both searched in every direction for the clothes, which, of course, were not to be found, as Dick had hidden them during the night.

"It's very odd," said Mr. Markwell; "and it's very annoying, as the gentleman won't wait."

"Will a pair of mine do, sir?" answered Lawless.

"Too short."

"Yet you might make shift with your smoking-cap and dressing-gown, and a pair of slippers. You can talk to him on the doorstep."

"So I could; a good idea," said Mr. Markwell.

Lawless presented him a pair of trousers, and helped him to dress, as he sympathized with him in his unpleasant position.

The trousers were hideously short, coming down only a little way below the knees; and in a smoking-cap, a dressing-gown and slippers, Mr. Markwell presented a very eccentric appearance.

"Dear me," he exclaimed, as he was dressing, "how tiresome all this is! Aide-de-camp, I presume, to the commander-in-chief. Both the trousers, how short they are! You see my advertisements do good. How do I look? Wants to place his nephew. How short this dressing-gown is! I shall be known to the horse world. I'm in a hurry. Great people do not like to be kept waiting."

Mr. Markwell descended the stairs, opened the door, and stood shivering on the doorstep.

"Good-morning, sir," he exclaimed. "I am only just up."

"What do you say?" replied Dick. "Come nearer."

"I am only just up."

"I am rather deaf."

"Only—just—up," shouted Mr. Markwell.

"Please get into the trap," replied Dick, "and sit down for a moment by my side. I am lame and rather deaf, or I would not give you the trouble."

Mr. Markwell muttered something about the nuisance of having such a visitor, and climbed up into the trap, taking a seat by Dick's side.

In his extraordinary costume, he did not recognize him any more than the servants had done.

He took him for an army man, who wished to place his nephew under his charge.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Markwell," said Dick; "and the commander-in-chief wishes to place his nephew under your charge. I am one of his aides-de-camp."

"I thought," answered Mr. Markwell, "that the commander-in-chief was the Duke of Cambridge, and his nephews would be—what would they be? I did not know he had any nephews."

"Oh, dozens," replied Dick.

"Bless me!"

Suddenly Dick jerked the reins, and the horse he drove started off.

"Hill stop; I'm not dressed!" cried Mr. Markwell, horror-stricken. "Where are you going to?"

"Certainly," said Dick. "If you would like a drive, I will give you one."

"I did not say so."

"Speak louder; I am rather deaf, and the wind's strong."

"For goodness sake, stop the horse."

"How much did you say for the course?" asked Dick.

"I didn't speak of it."

"Quite right. I want to know your terms for a course of lectures. The commander-in-chief's nephew will only have six months to spend with you, then he goes up for his examination."

"Oh, do stop, please—please do! Consider the state I am in, and the figure I shall cut," exclaimed Mr. Markwell.

"I will stop," said Dick.

"Speak louder," said Dick.

Mr. Markwell arose and shouted in his ear:

"Stop."

"All right," said Dick, "I'll make him go faster." And he whipped up the horse.

"I didn't say that. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Have a cigar?" asked Dick, taking out a case, and offering him one.

The horse went very quickly, and as they neared the crowded part of the King's Road, the passengers stared considerably at Mr. Markwell.

"Turn him around," said Mr. Markwell in Dick's ear.

"He won't turn! He's got such a temper! He's got the bit in his mouth! I've lost all control over him."

"We shall be smashed," groaned Mr. Markwell.

"He's thrown me out lots of times. I went to a plate-glass shop-window last week, and the next morning I found myself on a dining-room table as a cushion."

"Oh! the vicious beast. My good, dear sir, do stop; let me get down!"

"Anything is better than running the risk of being smashed, or perhaps killed."

The tutor was too much upset to talk about business, and almost lost his strength, and was unable to get out of the trap.

Dick pretended to have great difficulty in getting the horse, but pulled up in front of the house of Mr. Markwell, where there was a large number of people.

Mr. Markwell jumped down, and said:

"The horse is a brute, and will do anything."

With this and smothering sigh, he stepped out of the trap.

ers coming down just below the knees; with his dressing-gown, which had come undone, and which he could with difficulty keep the wind from blowing off his shoulders, he presented as funny a spectacle as the Brightonians had seen for a long time.

For a moment he stood as if bewildered.

"Seize him! stop him!" exclaimed Dick, at the top of his voice. "He's a lunatic. He'll do somebody harm. Stop him! stop him!"

Two or three of the more adventurous of the crowd made a dash at him.

Mr. Markwell, frightened out of his wits, took to his heels and rushed off in the direction of home.

"Harkaway! Tallho! Fetch him back," cried Dick. "A madman! a madman! A sovereign for the one who catches him. Hi! hi! hi! Collar the madman! Hi! hi!"

An excited mob set off in chase of the luckless tutor, who soon lost one shoe, and then the other.

One pursuer seized his dressing-gown, and that came off.

This was followed by his smoking-cap, and soon he was being hunted in his night-shirt and the short pair of trousers that Lawless had lent him.

Fear gave him wings.

Dick smiled grimly, and drove quickly to the yard from which he had hired the trap.

Paying for it, he turned up a doorway, took off his false hair, and looking himself again, he walked into the King's Road.

Mr. Markwell had been headed by the crowd, and turning around, was running back again.

"A lunatic! A madman! Stop him! Hi! hi! hi!" shouted, or rather roared the the crowd.

"He'll have a fit," thought Dick.

Mr. Markwell suddenly darted down some steps leading to the beach, and seeing a bathing-machine, dashed up the ladder and bolted the door.

The crowd, which grew larger every moment, thronged around the machine, and its members discussed the best means of securing the supposed escaped lunatic.

"Burn it down," said one.

"Smash it up with a hatchet," said another.

"He's got a knife. Take care," remarked a third, with a vivid imagination.

The horror of Mr. Markwell may easily be conceived. To be dragged out in such guise and chased by the rabble, taken for a lunatic, and at last brought to bay in a bathing-machine, was like a dream to him.

But that it was a fearful and embarrassing reality the shouts of the ever-increasing multitude proved.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HENRIETTA'S COUSIN.

THE position in which Mr. Markwell found himself was a most unpleasant one.

He was fantastically dressed; beguiled into the center of fashionable Brighton, on a false pretense—taken for a lunatic, and hunted into a bathing-machine by a wild and frantic crowd.

In the seclusion of his peculiar retreat he could hear the cries of the ever-increasing mob, and their suggestions for getting him out of his harbor of refuge.

What could he do?

In an agony of apprehension he put his head out of a little window at the side, which was opened by a sliding panel, and gazed upon his tormentors.

A stone flung by an errand boy went unpleasantly near his nose, and he beat a retreat.

At this moment the proprietor of the machine came up, and addressing a number of people, said:

"What's all this row about?"

"It's a lunatic," replied the man spoken to.

"A what?"

"A lunatic—stark, staring, raving mad!"

"Where?"

"In that machine."

"Why, that's my machine!" replied the proprietor, whose name was Pollard, and whose patronymic was painted on the side. "That won't do; I must try and get him out."

He went up the steps and knocked at the door, the crowd admiring his courage as much as if he were a lion-tamer going into a den of fierce animals thirsting for his blood.

"Let me in," said Mr. Pollard.

"I shan't," replied Mr. Markwell.

"Come out then," said Mr. Pollard.

"Not if I know it," replied Mr. Markwell, who thought this was a ruse on the part of the mob to get him into their power.

This was a complication of the situation, and Pollard did not know what to do; to break open the door of the machine would be to injure his own property, and he could not recover damages against a lunatic in an action at law.

He came to the conclusion that it was best to humor him.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want to go into the sea such weather as this is," said Mr. Markwell, with a shiver. "No, no, no! It's too cold. If you are a madman, and will come out, and talk quietly, I will tell you who I am and how I came in this place."

"Who are you?" asked Pollard.

"I don't want the mob to know; come inside."

"I am a friend of any number of lunatics," said Pollard to the crowd, who regarded him with admiration.

Some of the more weak-minded said their prayers as they never expected to see him again.

The door was opened and Pollard went in, and to him Mr. Markwell related what had happened.

The bathing-machine man remarked him in a moment as a highly respectable gentleman, who said that he had been a customer of his, and at once believed his story, and agreed to get him out of the mess.

"You must come with me, sir, and put my great coat over you, and let the people believe that you are going to the county asylum," said Pollard.

"Why?" answered Mr. Markwell. "I'm not mad."

"I know that sir; you are no more mad than I am!"

"It's my firm impression that I'm the victim of a practical joke. It is very odd that the aid-de-camp of the commander-in-chief should behave in such an extraordinary manner, and be unable to stop his horse!"

"Aid-de-camp, my eye, sir!" said Pollard. "It's a plant. But the crowd will hoot you, and make it unpleasant, unless you do as I say. Come with me! I'll tell 'em I've tamed you down and cowed you like, and that you are going back with me to the asylum from which you have escaped."

"So be it," answered Mr. Markwell, with a sigh; "I place myself in your hands."

Pollard led the way down the steps, and on to the beach, keeping a tight hold of the schoolmaster and saying to the people, "He's all right. I've got him, and mean to take him back to his friends."

The crowd made way for them, and hiring a fly, Mr. Markwell was driven to his residence at Hove, where he arrived full of gratitude to Pollard for his clever management of the affair and the loan of his great coat, for which he made him a handsome present.

Quick as Mr. Markwell had been in getting home, Dick had been quicker, and he had, on the pretense of going up to his own room, replaced all his tutor's clothes which he had abstracted the night before.

Miss Priscilla was delighted to see her brother back again, and listened to his story with amazement.

"Who could have played you such a trick?" she asked.

"I know not," answered Mr. Markwell. "That it is a trick I cannot doubt, for no one connected with the commander-in-chief would act in such a way. I fear I have been the victim of some one's plesantry."

Whether he suspected Dick or not he did not say, and there was an end of the matter.

But though he was disappointed in having the nephew of the commander-in-chief as a pupil, he was greatly surprised in another way, for the Rev. Mr. Lighthouse sent him the son of a friend of his, whose name was Horace Stoner, the cousin of Miss Henrietta, Emily's friend and school-fellow, of whom Dick was so fond.

Horace was not a boy calculated to be popular with Mr. Markwell's young gentlemen.

He was quiet and studious.

He knew his friends were not very well off, and that his success in life would depend upon his own exertions, which induced him to work hard.

Mr. Markwell undertook to prepare him for the university examination, and he hoped to obtain a scholarship, which would enable him to live at Cambridge without troubling his friends.

He was about fourteen, tall, fair and delicate looking, gentlemanly in his manner, and submissive.

He did not speak unless he was spoken to, and was generally to be found with a book in his hand.

Dick did not know that he was Emily's friend's cousin, his dear Henrietta's cousin, and therefore did not put himself out of the way to be civil to him.

One morning, about a week after Horace Stoner had arrived, the young gentlemen were in the room they used for studying.

Some were reading, others writing, and Brabazon happened to be reading the morning paper.

"I say," he exclaimed, "here's a Horace Stoner a bankrupt. He's a grocer in Eastcheap, wherever that may be. Is he any relation of yours, young shaver?"

Horace looked up, and his face colored as if he did not like the question.

"Can't you answer when you are spoken to?" exclaimed Brabazon.

"Yes."

"Well, then, what did I ask you?"

"It is my father," answered Horace.

"Your governor! You don't mean to say you are the son of a bankrupt grocer?" exclaimed Chapman.

"I can't help being what I am. I knew my father was in trouble, but they did not tell me he was a bankrupt, though I have heard that is nothing in the city," he exclaimed.

"Isn't it? Bankruptcy means cheating your creditors."

"I am sure my papa would not cheat anybody out of a halfpenny. He is much too honest, and people in trade cannot help being unfortunate sometimes. It may happen that you have taken bills from a man who fails to pay them; so that you, in your turn, cannot pay others to whom you are indebted."

"For my part, I wish old Markwell would be more particular about who he takes in. We don't want all the tagrag and bobtail of the city to associate with," observed Brabazon.

"Have you ever served behind the counter?" inquired Burrell.

"Yes, sometimes," answered Horace.

"How often have you run across the street for change?" asked Dick.

"I don't know. I have gone for change for a note when father hadn't it in the till."

"And they are going to send you to Cambridge! What's the good of trying to make a gentleman of you?" said Brabazon. "Sow's ears don't make silk purses. You'd better go home and stick to your shop."

"They consult me in all matters, and as my tastes inclined me to a studious life, I was allowed to do as I pleased, and I think your remarks are very rude and unkind," answered Horace, felling inclined to cry, but not liking to show any weakness of that sort to his unkind critics.

"I shall be obliged to you if you will not address your remarks to me," said Chapman.

"I was spoken to first," answered Horace, with more courage than he had ever shown before; "and I am not in the least bit ashamed of my parentage."

"I could stand anything but a bankrupt grocer," said Brabazon, with a sneer.

"What's the price of dips!" asked Burrell.

"If you want to know, you can go and inquire."

"Don't cheek me," cried Burrell, angrily; "I won't be cheeked by an errand boy."

"If you make impertinent observation to me, I shall reply to them as I see fit."

"Will you? then, perhaps, you will get a slap on the nose for your pains."

"You call yourselves gentlemen," said Horace, with sarcastic emphases, "but neither your language nor your manner entitle you to that designation. I did expect better treatment from Lighthouse, because, my father and his were old school-fellows together, and it was through him I came here; and then again, Miss Emily Lighthouse is at school at Kemp Town with my cousin."

"By Jove!" cried Dick. "Is Henrietta your cousin?"

"Yes, she is an orphan, you know. Her father was my father's brother," replied Horace.

"I'm surprised—rather—a few. It's knocked me off my perch, and doubled me up into a cocked hat," exclaimed Dick.

"I thought I should find a friend in Dick Lighthouse," continued Horace.

"And so you shall. Did you hear about—?"

"Young Henrietta running away to get married? Yes," answered Horace with a smile and many a good laugh we had over it."

"Hullo! what's that?" asked Chapman. "Lighthouse running away with a girl. I did not know that he was of the spoony order of fellows. We must hear all about that. Enlighten us further, my good grocer."

"Perhaps you will mind your own business," cried Dick, flushing angrily.

"I did not speak to you. Let the grocer answer."

"Stonor, holdy our tongue," Dick said.

"Oh, if you are going to be his champion, because you're spoony on his cousin, I shan't interfere. Perhaps you'll be an acquisition behind the counter," sneered Chapman.

"We've had enough about the grocer. Drop it, Dick exclaimed. "The first fellow who chaffs Stoner any more will find out his mistake."

"You were doing it yourself just now."

"Never mind; if you want to have a row with me, I'm ready for any of you."

And Dick glared defiantly around him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN ADVENTURE ON THE BEACH.

CHAPMAN was not a coward, but he was impressed with an idea of his own importance, and had imbibed the ideas of the Honorable Henry Brabazon, son of Lord Broadacres, whose gentility had been made fun of by Dick on his arrival at Mr. Markwell's.

He thought fighting low—only worthy of cabmen and roughs.

On this occasion he accepted Dick's challenge, and said:

"If I choose to speak to the grocer, I shan't ask your permission."

"If you utter that word again, I shall pitch into you," exclaimed Dick.

"What word?"

"You know well enough."

"I don't fight. It's ~~unmanly~~, but—"

"Then I do," said Dick, interrupting him, "and that makes all the difference, as you will find when I prop you in the eye."

"I always said you were not a gentleman," Chapman continued; "you would not use such language if you were; and we might have known what you were by your conduct when you first came here, which you may have thought very humorous, though it did not strike me as being so; and what I suggest to my friends is that we cut both you and the grocer."

"Oh, you will say it, will you?" cried Dick, between his teeth.

He sprang over a couple of forms and struck at Chapman, who, however, was prepared for the assault, and promptly parried it.

Dick was not to be thwarted, however, and feinting with his right, struck him on the jaw with his left, making his teeth rattle like castanets.

He followed up this success by two more blows, the last of which was a knock-down-one, and Chapman lay on his back, having very confused ideas of things in general.

"Do any more of you want a taste of it?" he exclaimed, looking around; "I shall be most happy to oblige you all, from the Honorable Henry to my friend Lawless."

They shrugged their shoulders and said nothing.

"All right," said Dick, smiling triumphantly, "you know now what you have got to expect if you chaff Stoner."

Chapman was attended to by Lawless, who said:

"Pick yourself up, old man."

With difficulty he arose and sat down, looking furiously at Dick.

"Pull yourself together," continued Lawless; "your time will come."

"I will fight him with pistols," replied Chapman.

"What's the use of talking nonsense?" Dick exclaimed. "You know dueling is not allowed now, and men cannot settle their disputes in that way."

Chapman stared indignantly at him, and, addressing Lawless, said:

"I have now had taken advantage of his superior strength, and I know what it is like to be beaten; and now, we will fight as it was four years ago, and I will be the victor."

Lawless and Dick sat down by Stoner's side, while Brabazon, Lawless and Burrell formed a sympathizing ring around Chapman.

"I don't want you to quarrel with your friends for my sake," exclaimed Horace Stoner.

"I feel very sorry that this disturbance should have taken place, though I should not have been strong enough to fight my own battle, and therefore am deeply grateful to you for your championship."

"I have put an end to the annoyance, at all events, and I don't think they will any of them venture to chaff you again," answered Dick.

"Not if they have any respect for your sledge-hammer fists. How hard you do hit!"

"Yes, I can slog a little," Dick answered, "and a very useful accomplishment it is, too, I can tell you."

After this occurrence, Dick and Stoner became great friends.

The other pupils did not speak to them, which did not annoy Dick much, as he found Horace's society all he required.

There was a fund of information, and a gentle, pleasant mode of conveying it, in the grocer's son which made him a useful and interesting as well as an agreeable companion.

The winter passed and the pleasant spring-time came. Dick had made great progress in his studies, and had given Mr. Markwell every satisfaction.

He was anxious to please his father, and make up to him all he owed to his kindness during the disgraceful affair into which Captain Hanger had betrayed him.

The Rev. Mr. Lighthouse wrote to Dick, telling him how pleased he was to hear of his good conduct.

Brabazon and the other pupils kept their word.

They ignored Dick's and Stoner's existence, and went about by themselves, as they did before.

The two boys were "cut dead," but their enemies did not attempt to chaff them any more.

Chapman had been taught a lesson, which the others were not slow to learn.

Dick was a dangerous customer and one not to be trifled with.

Stoner and Dick used to bathe together, and one fine day they were strolling along the beach when a school came up.

"Hold hard!" cried Dick, pressing Stoner's arm.

"What's the matter?" asked Stoner.

"Look at that man!"

"What's he doing?"

"Wait a bit. They're going to bathe. Let them get in. We'll sit down and watch them."

Accordingly they sat down in a secluded corner.

There were half-a-dozen bathing-machines that were drawn up the shelving beach by means of a winch, which was worked by a horse.

As far as the eye could reach on either side, there were no other machines, and it seemed to Dick that if the horse was got away, it would be impossible to draw any more.

"What a queer sight!"

"Yes, but it's a very useful sight," answered Dick.

"What will you do?"

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this. I won't deal with him any more. Help! help! Hi! hi! hi! I wonder how my boys are! Oh, dear me! perhaps he has drawn the other machines up, and has forgotten me? I always was afraid of the water!"

Another wave bigger than the former came with a rush into the machine, and made it shiver again, nearly taking the usher off his legs.

"That's the eleventh. They say the eleventh wave is always bigger than the others. What am I to do?" said Mr. Snarley.

His hat and coat now floated with his socks, and his boots were knocking about on the floor with the motion of the tide.

The usher grew desperate. "I will not die like this! I will make an effort. I will not perish like a rat in a drain!"

Thoroughly frightened, he managed to climb on the wheel of the machine, and so got on the top of the machine, over which he threw his legs.

"Help! help! Good people, help!" he cried piteously. "Confound that man! Help! Where is he?—my boys will be drowned. Hi! hi! Oh!"

This latter exclamation was caused by Dick, who, coming near the machine, threw a dead star-fish at him.

It struck him in the mouth, and entered that orifice, which was wide open, owing to his bawling.

"Pish!" spluttered Mr. Snarley, picking at the fish; "nasty—pish! It stinks; faugh!—what a bad taste it has."

The boys, meanwhile, were making the most terrible noise, for they thought they were going to be drowned. Those who could swim got into the water and so gained the shore in their clothes, but they were only about a dozen in number.

"I forgot the boys," muttered Dick, "this is growing serious; another five minutes, and it will be a case with them."

He looked around to see if he could obtain any assistance.

A small crowd had collected, attracted by the cries of the usher.

The situation was becoming embarrassing.

Dick began to see that he had carried his joke a little too far.

It was all very well to have Mr. Snarley in his shirt and trousers on the top of the machine.

But the position of the boys in the machines was growing more dangerous every minute.

Dick turned pale.

He was getting alarmed.

CHAPTER XXX.

RESCUED.

FORTUNATELY, at this critical juncture, a waterman happened to come by in a large boat plying for hire.

Dick ran down to the beach and hailed him.

"Want a row, sir?" said the man.

"Yes," said Dick. "Pull in."

The waterman did so, and got his boat near enough to the beach for Dick to spring on board.

"Where to, sir?" asked the boatman.

"Go to the bathing-machines and take the boys out. The horse has bolted, and the man can't wind them up."

This was quickly done.

In less than five minutes four out of the five machines were emptied, and in the fifth Dick found Messiter, his old friend.

"Is it you, Dick?" said Messiter. "I can understand now why we were left in the sea. Where's the bathing man?"

Dick winked and pointed to the hut, from whence the sound of knocking came, as if the prisoner was trying to work his way out with a hatchet.

"In there? What a lark!" replied Messiter.

"Look at Snarley," said Dick. "He'll have a fit. Stay in the boat with me, and we'll row around him."

"All right. You don't know how pleased I am to see you. I heard you were at a private tutor's in Brighton, and thought you would have given us a visit."

"Not good enough, old boy," replied Dick.

The boys were a little wet about the legs, and a good deal frightened, but none of them were hurt in any way, and they stood on the beach, looking curiously at the usher.

When the boat came to the machine, Mr. Snarley reeled with Dick. He had been watching the process of extricating the boys with considerable satisfaction, and concluded that it was his turn to come next to dry land.

"Ah, Lighthouse, how do?" he exclaimed. "You are just in time to save us from a most unpleasant catastrophe."

"Cat what, sir? It's a big word, and rather too much for me," answered Dick.

"Never mind; I will explain it at my leisure. Let me get into your boat, and then we can row after my hat, which I perceive is going out to sea. Well has the sea been described as a treacherous element; it is so indeed."

"Lie on your oars," said Dick to the boatman.

"Why are you stopping?" continued Mr. Snarley.

"You must see my anxiety to get ashore. I am a ridiculous object, parched up here half-drowned."

"You can't come in my boat," Dick exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"Because I have a very young wife, and she is quite a terror to me."

"Oh, I understand," said Dick. "I will row after your hat, and I shall be struggling in the water, battling with them for dear life. As you are so anxious to get ashore, I cannot swim."

"Everyone should learn to swim," remarked Dick.

"My education in that respect was neglected; but you are only joking. Take me off, and not a word shall be said about your refusal in the first instance."

"I don't care what you say," Dick replied. "I am my own master now, and you certainly shall not come ashore in my boat."

At this moment, a huge wave sent three of the six machines rolling on their sides, Mr. Snarley's being amongst the number.

He stood a good chance of being drowned, but Dick stuck a boat-hook into his clothes, and dragged him on board.

"Pull in quickly," said he giving the boatman some money.

Dick and Messiter assisted the usher to land, and he walked to the bathing man's hut, intending to remonstrate with him in very strong terms for his bad behavior.

Just then the door flew open with a crash before a vigorous kick.

One glance showed the infuriated man his bathing-machines on their sides, and in danger of being smashed against the beach.

Running wildly up to Mr. Snarley, he hit him violently on the nose, and sent him rolling over on the shingle.

"I'll teach you to play your confounded tricks upon me!" he cried. "Look at my beautiful machines."

"My good man," began Mr. Snarley, wiping the sand out of his mouth.

"Don't good man me," replied the fellow.

"My worthy, but impulsive friend, listen to me. I have cause to complain, for we were nearly all drowned through your negligence, and had it not been for the bravery and presence of mind of this young gentleman, who, I am proud to say was one of my pupils, we should have"—

"Hold your jaw!" interrupted the man. "Where's my horse?"

And having discovered his new loss, he began to run about like a madman in all directions.

"Good-morning," said Dick, "I must be off."

He thought that it was time to look after Horace Stoner, who might be caught on the horse, and shaking hands with Snarley and Messiter, left them to fight it out with the machine man.

He found Stoner near the old Chain Pier holding the horse by the bridle, and wiping his face with a pocket handkerchief.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick.

"The brute threw me off, and I was a good deal hurt," answered Stoner.

"Never mind. Come along with me and leave the horse. The owner will be here after him soon; and as the machines may be hurt, I don't think it would be prudent to let him bathe up at the Town Hall."

They turned away, and Dick continued to stare after the horse, which he had seen after his capture, and laugh with his description of the comical appearance that Snarley presented when sitting half-naked on the top of the bathing-machine.

"I wish I could be as light-hearted and as merry as you," remarked Stoner, as they walked along the beach.

"What's the use of being miserable?" answered Dick.

"I can't help it sometimes."

"For my part I always keep up my spirits. I have been on my best behavior, though, since I came to Markwell's, because I wanted to show my father that I could go on well if I chose. Still, to-day I could resist the temptation of playing Snarley a joke. But don't know what a tyrant he was when I was at a private school. But what's the matter with you? I noticed this morning, after the post came in and you read your letters, that you were down in the mouth about something. Out with it. You can trust me with your secrets."

"I did not like to worry you; but I had a letter from my father."

"Yes."

"My father is very poor. He is trying to pay his creditors in full since his bankruptcy, about which Chapman and Brabazon chafed me when they read it in the papers. You remember. It was the time when you took my part so nobly."

"That was nothing," said Dick, innocently.

"Oh, but it was, and I have never forgotten it, nor ever shall—all the more because you have suffered for my sake by being cut."

"That I don't care twopence about. What's your grief?"

"My father," answered Stoner, "can't afford to keep me at school. I would gladly go into the shop and be a clerk, but he thinks I know enough, and he wants me to be a scholar."

"I don't think you know enough," said Dick.

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"Oh! yes, constantly."

"Bless her heart. It may have been very foolish of me to run away with her, because we are too young to marry yet; I see that, and I don't think I'm good enough for her. They call me a scamp, but I'll reform."

"I am sure I see nothing objectionable in your conduct," answered Horace. "If you like to amuse yourself now and then, why shouldn't you? You are a gentleman, and can look forward to an excellent future. So long as you do nothing dishonorable, it doesn't matter much."

Dick's face flushed as he thought of the time when attempted to rob his father.

If he succeeded then, he would always have been in Captain Hanger's power; and what his future might have been in that case he shuddered to think.

All at once he stopped suddenly.

"What is it—are you not well?" asked Stoner, anxiously.

Dick could not speak.

He was only able to look in a dazed sort of manner at a man who confronted him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE APPARITION.

"So," said a voice he knew too well, "we meet again, Master Dick Lighthouse."

It was Captain Hanger.

Recovering himself by an effort, Dick said, "I wish to have nothing to say to you. Our acquaintance—such as it was—came to an end unexpectedly, and I have no desire to renew it."

"Possibly not; but I want to speak to you, and we live in a free country, and there is no law to prevent our conversing. I shall take the liberty of talking to you," replied the captain, in his usual jaunty, careless manner.

"Let me pass."

"Not at all. Have you forgotten your theft?"

Stoner stared.

"How dare you speak to me in that manner?" Dick said, angrily. "If you don't mind what you are about, I will do you an injury, and I would any man who attacked my honor, were he as big as an ox. You know very well that I didn't take your cash-box, and you are a villain."

"Pretty language. What would you say if I were to call a policeman and give you in charge now?" asked the captain.

"You can't do it. Your own character is too well known, and my father would have something to say about the"—

He hesitated.

"About what? Go on."

"You know what."

"The fact is, you are in my power, and you know it. Where are you now?"

"Find out," said Dick.

"I intend to do so. Give me what money you have about you and your address, then you may go."

"This is highway robbery," Dick said. "I am not the sort of fellow who would let you do that to me. Be off, or I'll turn you out of my house."

"I have a knife and don't cut your own throat, as the pirate did when he swam across the sea," said Captain Hanger, calmly. "Your father won't do anything to help you in your attempt upon his property. He respects his own name. But if you don't comply with my demands and give me what money you have about you and your watch and chain, I'll send you over to a policeman and it will go hard with you."

A cold perspiration broke out all over Dick's body.

He was reaping the whirlwind with a vengeance, and saw that foolish things, whether done in youth or age, cannot go without punishment.

This was the bitter result of his rash and disobedient behavior when at Mr. Simcox's, and the result of running away from school.

Captain Hanger's confident manner frightened him.

Taking from his pocket one pound thirteen and sixpence and his watch and chain, his mother's present, he gave them to the captain, saying;

"It is all I have."

"All right. I'll give you a receipt on account," answered Captain Hanger.

He then took a pocket-book and hastily wrote on a slip of paper an account, from Mr. Hanger to Dick Lighthouse, for one pound thirteen and sixpence, being part payment for robbery of my property by him while in my employment.

"Where are you now?" he asked him. "And how do you come to be here?"

"At Mr. Mervin's, Highfield Terrace, Hove," answered Dick, putting the receipt in his pocket, while the captain stared with very shame.

"You shall hear again from your humble servant," answered the captain.

He walked away.

"What did he say?" asked Stoner, horror-stricken.

"A scolding at the heart and downcast eyes Dick went home that night."

He ran away from school and met the circus people, and the money-box was lost, and he was weak and unable to do anything.

"What a shame! I don't know what to do," said Dick, putting in Dick, desperately. "I don't know what to do, and know that you despise me."

"Not exactly; but I am shocked."

"And now I am too little to marry your cousin when I am old."

"I don't know what to do, and know that you despise me."

"I don't know what to do, and know that you despise me."

"I don't know what to do, and know that you despise me."

"Honor," supplied Dick, with his accustomed impulsiveness. "Say it out like a man. Don't spare me."

Stoner was silent.

"I think I shall go and drown myself in the sea," Dick continued, desperately. "I don't care about living, now I have lost your good opinion."

"I will try to think well of you, because you acted on the compulsion of that bad man. Don't be rash, Dick. Your sin has found you out; but it is a dreadful story," continued Horace Stoner.

"Pity me, Horace. I acted foolishly; but I am not bad at heart," moaned Dick.

"I believe you," answered Horace; "we are all imperfect, and far be it from me to condemn you. This man who has just left us urged you to take what you thought your own money, and"—

He stopped abruptly.

The cries of many people startled him, and he saw a fly with a runaway horse coming at full speed up the King's Road.

The driver was vainly trying to stop the horse.

In another moment the maddened animal dashed up against a lamp-post, and the fly was shattered to pieces.

Miraculously, the driver escaped unhurt, but the occupant was thrown almost at the feet of the boys.

He was terribly injured, for he fell upon his head upon the curb, and blood flowed from the wound.

"Captain Hanger!" ejaculated Dick.

It was in truth the captain, who had hired a fly to go somewhere, and the horse being frightened at some noise, ran away, with the disastrous result we have detailed.

The unfortunate man breathed heavily, and seemed dying.

The crowd took him into a chemist's shop, and a surgeon was sent for.

But before he came he had breathed his last.

In the midst of his career and in the prime of life he had been cut off.

But before he died he recognized Dick, who, with Horace, had penetrated to the little parlor behind the shop.

A momentary gleam of intelligence lighted up his face.

"This is a judgment upon me," he murmured; "I have just time to say that I myself took the cash-box from the office. You are innocent."

With peevish impatience, he unfastened the chain of Dick's watch, and handed them both to him.

His strength failed him, or he would have restored the money.

"Say you forgive me?" moaned the wretched man, pitifully.

"With all my heart," answered Dick, generously.

His lips moved as if in prayer.

Then the former dull, impassive look of insensibility came over him, and his eyes closed.

The boys remained till all was over, and then took their departure, sad and sorrowful.

"Never mind the money," said Dick. "I have the watch, and you are a witness that he cleared my character."

"Certainly," said Horace.

"He would have been a terrible enemy. I should never have been free from his attacks. How soon accidents happen. Is it not true that in the midst of life we are in death?"

"It is indeed; and now, Dick, try to forget this unhappy episode."

"I will. Only promise me one thing?"

"What's that?" asked Horace.

"That you will still be my friend, and say nothing to my dear Henrietta about what you have heard to-day."

"I do promise, gladly."

The boys shook hands again, and Dick returned to Mr. Markwell's with a lighter heart, though it was many a long day before he forgot the awfully sudden death of the miserable Captain Hanger.

Horace Stoner had letters repeatedly from his cousin, who said she was very happy.

In her last letter she told him that she was going for a cruise in the yacht "Sapphire," which had been built for Mr. Maidment, her guardian.

Dick heard this, and hoped that she would not run into any danger, though he had a strange misgiving, for which he could not account, that some harm would happen to her.

He had made the acquaintance of the coastguardsmen at Hove, and listened with awe to their accounts of wrecks which had taken place on the coast.

Whether it was dwelling upon this that gave rise to an incident we are about to relate or not, we will not pretend to say.

The circumstance may have been owing to that subtle communion existing between the spirits of those who love one another.

But the mystery enveloping the supernatural world is so deep, that it is idle to speculate upon anything connected with it, however strange or extraordinary it may be.

Dick had gone to bed at the usual hour.

The wind was blowing fresh, and gradually increased to a gale, and so furious were the gusts that the casements rattled ominously.

The windows looked out upon the sea, and he could, before he went to sleep, hear the roaring sea beating violently upon the bleak and unroofed shore.

In the middle of the night he heard he saw a form appear at his bedside.

It was that of a young and beautiful girl; her long hair flowed over her shoulders, and her attire was drenched with sea-water.

The expression of her face was agonizing in the extreme.

She appeared to be the prey of an absorbing terror, and extended her arms to Dick as if imploring his protection or assistance.

He recognized his darling Henrietta.

With a cry, he work up and gazed around him wonderingly.

Nothing but a murky blackness met his eyes.

The sea still roared, and the wind and the rain beat against the window-panes without.

At that moment he heard the sullen booming of a gun at sea.

It was a signal of distress.

He lay still and listened.

Again and again, at intervals of half a minute, came the dreadful and foreboding sound.

"Some vessel has stranded, and will soon be a wreck on a night like this," he muttered. "I must get up."

Springing out of bed, he struck a light, and, looking at his watch, he found it was half-past two.

Quickly dressing himself, he determined to go to the beach, and speak to his friends the coastguardsmen.

Their station was not far off.

He could not account for his conduct.

At any other time he would have gone to sleep again. But there are times when we feel compelled to do certain things without knowing why.

We obey a mysterious cause, and are urged on against our will, or perhaps we have no will at all in the matter.

When dressed, he went cautiously along the passage, not wishing to disturb the other sleepers in the house, and stopped before Horace Stoner's door.

His rest was apparently feverish, for he was tossing about in his bed, and talking wildly in his sleep.

"Wake up, Horace," cried Dick.

"What is it?" asked the boy, rubbing his eyes.

"I want you to get up."

"I am so glad you have come. I have had such a bad dream."

"What did you dream about?" asked Dick.

"It is very curious; but I was dreaming about Henrietta. I thought she came to me, and asked me to help her."

"So did I dream about your cousin," answered Dick. "There is something wrong. Get up quickly."

Again the signal gun boomed out, and its sullen noise was carried by the wind shorewards.

"What is that?" cried Horace.

"A signal gun from some ship in distress. I am going to see all about it. Will you come? Yes or no. There is no time to be lost. The coastguard station is not far off. We shall be in time to lend a hand to the poor souls, if we hurry."

"All right!" answered Horace, getting up.

The night was not cold, though the weather was so alarmingly rough.

In a short time, both boys were ready, and descended the stairs quietly, letting themselves out at the front door, and issuing into the street in the gray dawn of early morning, for it was now the beginning of summer, and the nights were shorter as every week progressed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WRECK.

THE boys hastily made their way to the coastguard station.

Men engaged in the service was running about with lanterns.

Approaching one of them, whom he knew, named Simmons, Dick asked what had happened.

"A gentlemen's yacht, sir," was the reply, "has been driven ashore by the wind, and as the sea is beating over her, she must become a wreck presently, so we are getting the rocket apparatus ready."

"Can I lend a hand?" said Dick.

"No, thank you, sir, we're not short handed, and you don't understand the process," answered the coastguard.

Dick and Horace consequently contented themselves with looking on.

The sea ran very high, and broke in clouds of feathery spray over the doomed vessel, which was just discernible in the dim morning light.

Presently the coastguard fired the first rocket, which, being aimed too low, did not reach the yacht.

The second attempt was more successful, the rocket striking the rigging and enabling the sailors to seize the rope which was attached to it, and make it fast.

Simmons then placed himself in the belt, and was lowered by the rope to the yacht, being completely lost in the huge waves at times, which seemed to engulf him.

But, thanks to his cork jacket, and the excellent working of the apparatus, he did not lose his other than the loss of his boots and the soles of his shoes.

The third attempt was also successful, and an anchor was thrown, which, however, seemed an age, before it returned with a lady, whom he landed but fainting.

He went back on his errand of mercy immediately, and Dick assisted the lady into the coastguard station, where restoratives were administered to her.

"Is my father safe, and my mother, and my sister?" she inquired, anxiously.

"We trust they soon will be," answered Dick, kindly. "May I ask the name of the yacht?"

"The 'Sapphire,'" replied the young lady.

"Extraordinary!" exclaimed Dick, trembling all over; "and you are Miss Maidment?"

"Yes. How could you tell that?" asked the girl, wondering.

"My father told me," answered Dick, without hesitating.

"You were out there yesterday in the Thames, and saw the 'Sapphire' go down? Was it in the afternoon, and did you see the sailors? And were you driven on shore, and did you see the 'Sapphire' go down?"

"Yes, I saw the 'Sapphire' go down, and I saw the sailors, and I was driven on shore, and I saw the 'Sapphire' go down."

"I must go to the shore and see the 'Sapphire' go down."

He rushed from the house, and went once more to the beach.

It was agony to think that his dear Henrietta should be in danger.

He did not then stay to consider what an extraordinary interpretation his dream had had, though it occurred strongly enough to him afterwards.

Simmons had made three trips to the yacht, bringing safely away, Mrs. Maidment and her two daughters.

"There is one more lady," he said; "we'll have her, and then we must look after the men."

Dick did not doubt that this was Henrietta, and he strained his eyes to see if she were coming.

"It is my cousin's turn next," murmured Horace, to whom Dick related all that he knew.

"I wish they would let me go along the rope," Dick said.

"She is safer with Simmons. He is stronger than we are, and has more experience. Is it not odd that we should wake up with our dreams, and come here to find that Henrietta really is in peril?"

"So strange that I cannot understand it. But, hush! here she comes."

As he spoke, they could see Simmons hauled along with a girl in his arms.

He neared the shore, and the boys held their breath. Suddenly there was a sharp crack, and a despairing cry.

Both man and girl vanished as if swallowed up by the ravenous sea.

The rope had broken.

In fact, the sea had caused the yacht to give an alarming lurch, and the strain was more than the rope could bear.

It snapped in half, and Simmons was struggling in the sea, his lovely burden on his arm.

"Heaven help us! she will be drowned!" cried Horace; "I must save her!"

Before anyone could stop him, he had plunged madly into the foaming surf.

Dick was nearly distracted.

Seeing a coil of rope lying on the beach, he tied one end round a flagstaff, and the other round his waist.

"Can you swim?" asked a coastguard, who saw what he was about, and devised his purpose.

"I am a fish," exclaimed Dick.

"It's neck or nothing, sir," answered the man.

"I know it," Dick said, who was very calm now.

"Watch my movements; when I grasp the girl, haul in."

"Right," replied the man.

Simmons, who was much exhausted, found himself obliged to drop his hold of the insensible girl; and, in order to save his own life, dragged himself ashore by the aid of the broken rope.

Dick saw this, and the next moment was battling with the waves.

He did not know what had become of Horace, but he fancied he heard him crying for help some distance lower down the beach, where the waves had washed him.

Dick's eyes were fixed upon a pale face and long, fair hair, like tangled seaweed, which ever and anon appeared and disappeared.

The waves drove him back; and it was with the utmost difficulty that he got into deep water, though he was slightly helped by an undercurrent caused by the receding of the tide, which was rapidly going out.

His great fear now was that she would sink to rise no more before he reached her.

She was somewhat assisted in floating by the clothes she wore, which gave her a temporary buoyancy.

The coastguard fired another rocket, and the apparatus was repaired.

Simmons was too weak to be of any more use.

He crawled ashore and was helped by strong arms, more dead than alive, to the station, while one of his companions took his place on the rope.

All this was enacted while Dick was searching for Henrietta.

He was so close to her.

It was impossible to say whether she was alive or dead.

Placing his arm firmly round her waist, he made a dash to those on shore.

For a time he did not seem to be heard.

A joyous feeling came over him when he felt himself drawn in.

They had heard his cries, and were pulling at the rope.

By his gallant conduct Henrietta had been snatched from the jaws of death.

He was assisted to the coastguard station, while Henrietta was carried thither.

Two efforts of those about her.

Dick could do no more, or he would have gone in search of Horace.

His strength had departed, and he was as helpless as a fish.

Mr. Maidment and one of the crew were brought in.

He was assisted to the coastguard station, while Henrietta was carried thither.

Two efforts of those about her.

Dick could do no more, or he would have gone in search of Horace.

His strength had departed, and he was as helpless as a fish.

Mr. Maidment, congratulating himself on the escape of his family, went down to the beach.

"Four dead!" he said. "How is that?—there were but three left on board."

He was so close to her.

It was impossible to say whether she was alive or dead.

Placing his arm firmly round her waist, he made a dash to those on shore.

For a time he did not seem to be heard.

Horace had perished because he did not stay to reflect as Dick had done, and courted certain death by his rashness.

They were careful to say nothing to Henrietta about the shocking occurrence when she recovered, and was taken with others to the nearest hotel.

The news of the wreck rapidly spread, and several people made their way to the scene to gratify an idle curiosity.

Dick was standing by his poor dead friend, his eyes full of tears, and directing his removal to Mr. Markwell's house.

There was a smile of resignation on his parted lips, and his hands were folded over his breast, either by accident or design.

"He is with the angels now," murmured Dick.

"Hallo! who is this?" cried a voice at his elbow.

He turned round and recognized Brabazon and Lawless, to whom he could not help replying in a severe tone:

"It is the boy you persecuted and despised because he was a tradesman's son; but he died in trying to save another, and has gone, I trust, where there is no distinction of class, for in the sight of Him who made us we are all equal."

"You need not preach a sermon," answered Brabazon.

"Perhaps we were wrong. Anyhow, I am very sorry for this."

"Tell us how it happened," asked Lawless.

Dick's voice was choked by emotion as he related first his dream, and then the episode of the wreck.

He did not dwell upon his own bravery in saving Henrietta under such desperate circumstances.

He merely stated that she was finally rescued.

"You may as well add, sir, that it was you who saved the young lady," said Simmons, who was standing by with a stretcher on which to place the body of Horace.

"Did you really?" asked Brabazon, looking at him admiringly.

"He will tell you all about it," replied Dick, sinking down on the beach by the side of his friend, and crying again unrestrainedly.

"It was a fine thing, sir; as fine a thing as was ever done," cried Simmons. "The rope broke while I had her in my arms, and the sea tore her from me. It wouldn't have done it if I had been strong and well, but I had made three journeys before, and I hadn't any strength left to speak about. However, young master here lies a rope about him, and in he goes. Nothing could have saved her if it had not been for him."

"I'm proud of you," said Brabazon, "and if you will shake hands, we'll be friends again."

Dick extended his hand with a mournful smile.

"This is a lesson to us not to be at enmity with one another," he said, pointing to Horace.

They put him on the stretcher, and he was carried to Mr. Markwell's house, and laid upon his bed.

Mr. Markwell had received no intimation of what had happened, and his astonishment may be imagined.

His first care was to telegraph for the unfortunate boy's father.

A message came from the hotel to say that Mr. Maidment and Miss Stoner wanted to see Dick—the latter being anxious to thank him personally for his courageous conduct.

But Dick made an excuse.

"I should go if I were you," said Mr. Markwell, who was by.

"I can't see his cousin, sir," said Dick, "because I cannot forget that it was indirectly through me that he met with his death. If I had not roused him up and taken him with me, he would not have been tempted to rush into the sea and so be drowned."

"You blame yourself without a cause. Be comforted—these accidents are directed by an All-wise Providence. It was not your fault," answered Mr. Markwell.

But Dick burst out sobbing again, and would not go to see Henrietta.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DICK IS A SCAPEGRACE STILL.

MISS PRISCILLA MARKWELL had been very fond of Horace Stoner, whom she liked as much as she detested Dick.

She did not agree with her brother that Dick was not to blame for Horace's death; on the contrary, she held that it was altogether his fault.

"If he had not got up in the night and worried Horace Stoner into accompanying him to see the wreck, which he heard of through the minute-gun, the poor boy would not have been drowned. As to the apparition, that is in my opinion all nonsense, and only an excuse for going out. He is a bad boy. None of the other young gentlemen like him, and I should send him away."

"He was brave enough, for he saved the girl's life," remarked Mr. Markwell.

"For whom he has conceived a foolish attachment. His character came with him," answered Miss Priscilla.

This conversation took place in the study, and Miss Priscilla did not notice that Dick was present.

He had been sitting in a corner, brooding over his grief, and getting up, he walked straight to Miss Priscilla.

"Here is the boy himself. You should be careful about what you say, my dear," observed Mr. Markwell.

"Your remarks about myself, ma'am, are not very complimentary," said Dick; "and I will thank you in future to keep them to yourself. I recognize no authority here but Mr. Markwell's."

"And that you do not care much about," answered Miss Priscilla. "But I shall not waste my breath in arguing with you."

"Thank you," answered Dick, with a provoking smile.

Miss Priscilla went away, and Dick returned to his seat.

In the evening, Mr. Stoner came down from London. His grief at his son's death was intense, but he was grateful to heaven for preserving the life of his niece.

By this time the news had been broken to Henrietta; and the father of the dead boy and his niece mingled their tears together.

Mr. Stoner was generous enough to call upon Dick and shake him by the hand, while he thanked him warmly for what he had done.

"Do not come and see Henrietta now," he said. "I wish to spare her any further excitement; but when the holidays come, I shall expect you to visit me at my little place at Wimbledon. You may rely upon Henrietta being there also. Do not blush. I know the story of your running away; and, if she likes you well enough, I will do all I can with her guardians to help on your courtship, but"—

"What air?" asked Dick.

"Boys and girls cannot marry. You must remember that. This is an age of early marriage; royalty has set the example. Yet you must be twenty years old at least before you two could marry one another."

"Thank you, sir, for what you have said. Thank you very much," answered Dick.

"My poor boy is to be buried at Brighton. You will follow him?"

"Gladly. We were such friends, and—and"—

Dick broke down; he could say no more.

Mr. Stoner patted him on the shoulder and went away.

In a week from that time, Horace was buried in the Brighton Cemetery.

The ladies of the family did not follow him, but Dick saw Henrietta for a short time; and although the occasion was a melancholy one, he left her with the fond assurance that he was dearer to her than before.

Dick returned to his work.

The death of Horace healed the differences which had formerly existed between him and the other pupils.

They all became friendly again; but Miss Priscilla's dislike to Dick increased to positive rudeness.

"I can't stand that old girl's cheek much longer," remarked Dick to Brabazon, one day, when the mid-summer holidays were approaching.

"I must say she's not so nice in her manner to you as she might be," answered Brabazon with a smile.

"She has never forgiven me for pulling her wig off," observed Dick. "For though she could not prove that I did it, she had her suspicions."

"That was great fun."

"I'll frighten her out of her wits," said Dick. "Now we are working hard for the examination, you know, we sit up later than she, and Mr. Markwell, too."

"What's the dodge?" asked Brabazon.

"I'll buy a black mask and make a row in the corridor, pretending I am a burglar and bring her out of bed in her nightcap, and then laugh at her."

"Will it be fair?" said Brabazon.

"It will be a lark, and I was always inclined that way."

"But"—

"I don't ask you to help me. You won't be involved in it. I only ask you to hold your row and enjoy the fun."

"All right," answered Brabazon.

With Dick, to conceive an idea of this sort, was instantly to put it into execution.

He bought a black mask to cover his face, and armed himself with the pistol he had bought for shooting cats.

The other pupils were very much amused at the idea that he was about to play Miss Priscilla a

They congregated on the stairs.

Dick, about half-past eleven o'clock, went to the corridor, looking very much like a burglar.

He went into Miss Priscilla's room, and standing by the bedside, exclaimed in a stern voice:

"Your money and the key of the plate-chest, or your life!"

With this he presented the pistol at her head.

Miss Priscilla awoke with a start.

"Oh dear, kind gentleman," she answered. "Take all I have, but spare my life."

She handed him the watch and her purse, which she kept under the pillow, as well as the key of the plate-chest.

"It is well," said Dick, in a tragic tone. "Dare to move for the space of two hours, and instant death will be your portion."

Miss Priscilla was in a terrible fright.

She nearly fainted.

But directly the burglar's back was turned, she remembered that her brother always kept a loaded

revolver in his room, and that he would be terribly angry with her, if she allowed the contents of the

plate-chest to be taken away.

Accordingly, she got up as Dick fully

she would, and entered the passage in her

and nightcap, which was of an old-fashioned kind, something resembling an inverted coal-scuttle.

In the middle of the passage Dick flashed his lantern

"Thieves! Murder! Murder! Thieves! Thieves!" she cried, at the top of her voice, shrieking loudly afterwards.

In an instant Mr. Markwell, revolver in hand, was in the room.

Dick was about to beat a retreat.

But he had not gone far when he saw that the burglar who had come to rob the premises, he leveled

his pistol at him.

Dick fell down on the

his fellow-pupils.

"That's right. Stick to him; hold him. Don't let the rascal go!" he exclaimed.

DURING the holidays, Messrs. Simcox and Markwell had not been idle.

They had a new school-room built and sent out circulars far and wide, which brought them a fresh addition of pupils, so that the school was nearly seventy strong when the boys reassembled.

Mr. Markwell took the highest class in classics and mathematics.

Mr. Simcox had the next, and a new usher, named Slocum, was expressly engaged for the third form, while Mr. Snarley superintended the fourth, consisting of the smaller boys.

To accommodate the new arrivals, a house next door had been taken, and doors were made in the wall to allow of communication.

One was Mr. Markwell's house and under his care, the other Mr. Simcox's, though they were both united and formed one establishment.

Dick Lighthouse arrived early in the morning on the day appointed for the return of the boys.

He saw several old faces, and many new ones.

Among the former was his friend Messiter.

They shook hands cordially and adjourned to the school-room, which was in a state of confusion, as there was no work on the first day.

"I didn't expect to see you back again," said Messiter.

"Nor did I expect to come. However, here we are again, and we must do what we can to make our school a success."

"I have heard you were a tyrant," said Messiter. "There has been no fun, and we have all groaned under the way of a tyrant."

"Indeed! Who may he be?"

"His name is Armond," said Messiter; "he is a tall, hulking fellow, with long, wiry arms, and sledge-hammer fists—an awful bully, and a fellow I'm sure you won't like at all."

"Oh, that's the size of it, is it?" said Dick.

He took up a piece of chalk and began to write on the black slate.

"Simcox & Co., Purveyors of Latin, Greek, and Mathematics," appeared first; then he wrote, "Cocky Armond, B. B."

"That's not a bad name for him. He is cocky," said Messiter, laughing.

"And he shall be called Cocky Armond from this day forth," replied Dick.

"What's B. B.?" inquired Messiter.

"That's just what I want to know," exclaimed a loud voice at his elbow.

Dick quietly looked up at the questioner.

"B. B.," he replied, "stands for beast and bully."

"Oh, does it? Thank you for the information, and now perhaps you'll oblige me by rubbing that out."

"Oh, dear no," answered Dick, coolly.

"Then I shall have to make you."

"Messiter, who is this individual?" asked Dick.

"It's Armond himself," replied Messiter.

"Indeed, Messiter, you've forgotten one thing."

"What's that?"

"Didn't I tell you he should have a nickname?"

When you have occasion to speak of Mr. Armond in future, you will be pleased to give him his prefix.

Cocky Armond sounds well. Repeat it after me."

The new-comer stared at Dick as if he did not understand him.

He was a tall, thin, dark boy of about seventeen years of age, having a sallow complexion, bad teeth, big heavy eyes, a hanging jaw and a large bowed nose.

"I don't want any of your cheek, Mr. What's-your-name," said Armond.

"Lighthouse—Richard Lighthouse. Sorry I haven't a card," replied Dick.

"Well, I don't want any of your cheek, I tell you."

"Don't you? Can't help that. The obligation is on your side. Sorry for you, if you can't see it. I've given you a degree. B. B. Cocky Armond, Esq., B. B. Sounds well, doesn't it, Messiter?"

"That's right," said Messiter.

Armond was then a school-boy, but he was very strong.

He was a tall, thin, dark boy of about seventeen years of age, having a sallow complexion, bad teeth, big heavy eyes, a hanging jaw and a large bowed nose.

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"I don't want any of your cheek, Mr. What's-your-name," said Armond.

"Lighthouse—Richard Lighthouse. Sorry I haven't a card," replied Dick.

"Well, I don't want any of your cheek, I tell you."

At length he succeeded in striking him under the ear with one of his sledge-hammer blows.

Dick spun across the room, just as the door opened, and he fell into the arms of Mr. Snarley.

"What is all this?" exclaimed the usher, looking round in surprise. "You boys, you boys, this will not do."

"Morning sir," said Dick, recovering himself a little.

"It's Mr. Snarley, I think, though my ideas of things in general are rather confused just now."

"Lighthouse, as I live," replied the usher. "But I might have guessed it. No other boy would have set the school in an uproar five minutes after his arrival."

Dick sat down on a form and looked at Armond, who was applying his handkerchief to his mouth, and withdrawing it crimson-stained.

"Are you also concerned in this riot, Armond?" continued Mr. Snarley.

"In my position, sir, of head of the school, it is my duty to keep order," answered Armond.

"Very true. Allowance must be made for your position. How did this broil originate?"

Armond had wiped off the slate the words which referred to him, and, pointing to what remained, said:

"Lighthouse, sir, had written 'Simcox and Co., Purveyors of Latin, Greek and Mathematics.' I thought this disparaging, and remonstrated with him, whereupon he struck me viciously. I forbore to hit him again until he struck me twice, and then I knocked him across the room, as you perceived when you entered."

Dick drew a long breath, and let it out again in the form of a loud whistle.

"What have you to say to this, Lighthouse?" asked Mr. Snarley.

"He's told more lies, sir, in two minutes than any average boy will tell in a twelvemonth," replied Dick.

"Stop a bit," said Mr. Snarley, holding up his hand. "I don't like the use of the words 'lies' or 'liar.' Say 'falsehood' or 'story-teller.'"

"I'll call him Ananias, who, the Bible says—"

"Silence! Did you, or did you not, write the sentence on the slate?"

"Yes," replied Dick.

"Did you, or did you not, strike Armond first?"

"I did, sir."

"Then his case is proved."

"But—"

"No more. Not a word!" exclaimed Mr. Snarley; "you are clearly in the wrong."

Armond smiled maliciously. He knew beforehand that the usher would take his part if he could.

"I will be heard, sir. He pitched into me," exclaimed Dick, because I wrote something else on the slate, which he has rubbed out."

"What was that?"

"Cocky Armond, B. B."

"What may the enigmatical letters B. B. mean?" inquired Mr. Snarley.

"Beast and bully, sir. I have heard his character, and I took the liberty of christening him."

"You were wrong. Armond is at the head of the school, which has very much changed since you were here before, and Armond was justified in maintaining his authority. We must have discipline," said Mr. Snarley, adding, "What is a school without discipline?"

No one answered him, and he went on.

"As this is the first day of your assembling together, I shall pass over this breach of discipline. Do not let it occur again. Armond, come with me; you must have your eye attended to. Boys, live together in peace and unity."

Mr. Snarley linked his arm in that of Armond, and they left the school-room together.

The boys crowded round Dick, delighted with the proof of his prowess he had given them.

"We'll call him 'Cocky' forever," said one.

"And B. B.," too," exclaimed another.

"Did he hurt you?" asked Messiter.

"Rather. He doesn't fight fairly. I didn't expect that swinging round-hand under the ear, but I shall be up to his tactics the next time," answered Dick.

He had made an enemy of Armond, who was not of a forgiving or forgetting disposition.

"I am glad you have made an example of him," said Messiter. "We all hate him."

"Not a word more," said Dick.

"I shall be up to his tactics the next time," answered Dick.

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In Dick's dormitory there were three boys, one of whom was Messiter, another Fowler, and another Smith.

The latter had been put in as a spy upon them, and it was his duty to inform Armond of everything that was done contrary to the rules.

Messiter guessed this, and informed Dick of his suspicions.

"If you are right," said Dick "we'll make his life a burden to him, and he'll be glad to ask to be removed."

Most of the boys had brought from home some luxuries in their boxes, and these were to be eaten when Snarley, who had charge of their passage, had been round to see that the light was out.

This was duly accomplished as the clock struck ten.

"Now, my boys," said Dick, springing out of bed, "produce the spread."

This was done with a rapidity worthy of the occasion. The delicacies were temptingly arranged on Dick's counterpane.

All but Smith assembled round the table, anxious to begin the feast.

"Where's Smith? Come along, old fellow, and tuck in," exclaimed Messiter.

"I'd rather not, thank you," replied Smith. "I'm not hungry."

"What's the odds? I am always hungry when there's anything in the way."

"You must excuse me. It's not right; that's another thing: it's against the rules."

"Humbly," said Dick. "Who says strawberry jam? Spread some on a coffee biscuit or some of that short-bread, Fowler. I'll attend to Smith."

The boys began the feast, and the luxuries began to diminish in size and number.

Two pairs of lighted candles stood on the mantelpiece, which gave plenty of illumination.

"You must have something, sniff," cried Dick. "It's first night."

"I know that, Lighthouse; but it does not make any difference. I would rather starve than do anything wrong!" replied Smith.

"We have too much regard for your health to neglect you. Fowler, hand me that box of tooth powder."

Fowler did as he was requested.

Dick spread some jam on a biscuit, and with the blade of his knife mixed a lot of tooth powder in it.

"Messiter," he said, "I will thank you for the soap."

When it was given him, he scraped a quantity on the top of the tooth-powder.

"Oh!" he said, looking round, "that citrate of magnesia on the mantelpiece will do; hand it over; and you, Messiter, scrape some slate-pencil."

The slate-pencil and magnesia were added to the mess which was stirred up together.

Going over to Smith's bed with the prepared biscuit in his hand, Dick said:

"Open your mouth and shut your eyes, my dear Smith, and see what good luck has sent you."

"Oh, don't, Lighthouse, please don't make me eat that nasty stuff," pleaded Smith.

"Oh! but you must. We know you're going to sneak, and you must have something to eat."

"Sneak! I'm sure!"

"Now don't tell stories. Lying is worse than sneaking, you know, and it's against the rules. Open your mouth," said Dick.

"I won't," replied Smith.

"I shall have to make you, my boy."

He put the butt end of his knife against the under part of Smith's ear, where the jawbone ends, and pressing it, Smith's mouth flew open, and in went the mess.

Then Dick kept his mouth shut till he had swallowed it.

"That's Lighthouse's patent food for cattle," he cried.

Smith gulped down the last of the nauseous preparation with a shudder.

"I shall have to make you, my boy."

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CHAPTER XXXV.

COCKY ARMOND IS MISTAKEN FOR A BURGLAR.

THE boys thought it might be Mr. Snarley who was prying about, or the new usher, Mr. Slocum, anxious to show his zeal.

Their suspicion was strengthened when a few minutes had elapsed and no one came.

Dick got out of bed, and went up to the door.

"Does Armond come in and kick the door?"

"No; he only peeps in through the chink, and when he sees a light, and listens," said Messiter.

"Didn't you bring a cane back with you?"

"Yes; and so did you."

"Where's your's?" asked Dick.

"In the corner, near my

"Jump out and collar your cane. Give me mine, too."

"What for?"

"We'll go out and fall upon Armond and say we took him for a burglar."

"Bravo! That's an idea," Messiter exclaimed, delighted.

"If we don't wallop him within an inch of his life, I'll never play cricket again. Come on."

"I should like it," continued Messiter, "he is such a sneak. You know he has a room to himself, just like a master, and no one can tell when he goes in or out."

In a short time they were both armed with short, thick canes.

Without putting anything on, they opened the door suddenly, and rushed into the passage.

As they expected, Cocky Armond was listening, and so suddenly was the door opened that he nearly fell into Dick's arms.

He had put on an old pair of trousers, a great coat, list slippers, and had tied a comforter round his neck. Seizing him by the throat, Dick cried:

"It's a thief, I know it's a thief. Welt him; let him have it, Harry."

Messiter did not want telling twice.

While Dick held Armond, he bade him unmercifully with his cane, and the victim's cries resounded far and wide.

"Let me hold him now," said Messiter, "and you have a try."

"All right," answered Dick.

The grasp was shifted, and Armond, half stifled by the tight grip on his collar, and bewildered both by the sudden attack and the pain he suffered, was unable to make any effectual resistance.

"Do—don't, Lighthead," stammered Armond. "It's me. It's Armond."

"I know better than that, you cowardly thief, to come and prowl about in the night to steal the boys' things," Dick answered.

"Re-ally. It's me. It's Ar-Armond," cried the victim, writhing under each fresh stroke.

"Go to Putney," said Dick, incredulously, "you are some disguised servant or other, but I'll teach you a lesson. Armond indeed! I know Armond; we are great friends. I have an immense respect for Armond since he punched my head."

And still the cane came down in a shower of blows, till Armond writhed and twisted like a snake, yelling and crying like a madman.

The boys rushed out of their dormitories, candles were lighted, and the utmost confusion prevailed.

Mr. Snarley, alarmed at the unusual noise, came up stairs with a light in his hand.

"What's all this tumult about?" he asked.

"A thief, sir; Messiter and I caught him in the passage, and we have been clobbering him," answered Dick.

"Surely you imagine a vain thing," cried the usher, who had an inkling of the truth. "Desist from this furious punishment."

"Let him go, Harry," said Dick to Messiter.

Cocky Armond fell down on his knees, and began to sob with rage and pain.

Mr. Snarley held the light near his face.

"It is, yes, it is Armond," he cried.

At the sound of the usher's voice, Armond recovered himself, and rose to his feet trembling like a leaf.

"How did this happen?" inquired Snarley.

"I was walking in the passage, when Lighthead and Messiter fell upon me and beat me like a hound," exclaimed Armond.

"We heard a noise in the passage, sir," exclaimed Dick, "and knowing the lights were all out, thought it was burglars. We came out, and by the moonlight saw a figure in a comforter and a great coat; then we felt sure it was burglars, so we fell upon him and trashed him to save the house from being robbed; you can't blame us. He shouldn't have got himself up like that; besides, what business had he about the passage after you had seen the lights put out?"

This reasoning was unanswerable.

It would not do for Mr. Snarley to say that he was prowling about as a spy with his knowledge and approval.

So he was obliged to regard it in the light of a mistake.

"It is a sad error," he exclaimed, "and I do not know that I can commend your zeal, Lighthead."

"Won't you do anything to him for this?" cried Armond, still smarting all over.

His vindictive eyes glared at Lighthead, and seemed to flash fire at him.

"I do not see how, in strict justice, I can do so. Dear me, look at these boys congregated around me like sheep. Go to your beds, you boys. Go at once."

There was a scampering, and the passage was cleared off all but the chief actors in the drama.

"Hold on," continued Armond, "while I flog him as he did me. It is all nonsense to say he did not know me."

"Mr. Snarley is too much of a gentleman to treat anyone unfairly," replied Messiter.

"I cannot do as you wish, Armond. Come with me; retire to your room, and you other boys go to yours," replied Mr. Snarley. "We must discuss this unfortunate affair in private. Come, Armond, lean on me."

Dick and Messiter returned to their dormitory.

The boys were sitting on their beds, discussing the extraordinary scene which they had just witnessed.

Everyone was pleased, and Fowler was inclined to think it done on purpose; but remembering Smith was in the room, he declared he thought it was a thief, as he wouldn't have said anything before Smith on any account.

The next morning Armond did not appear in school.

He was so sore with his beating that he kept his bed.

When he did make his appearance he had occasion to pass by Dick.

Lowering his voice until it had a sharp, serpentine hiss, he said—"I shan't forget you, Lighthead."

Dick grinned and rubbed his shoulders as if they hurt him.

He soon found out, however, that Armond was a man of his word.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FLYING TRAPEZE.

THERE was one thing gained, however, by Dick's behavior.

Armond gave up walking in the passages as a spy at night.

Ten days passed, and in the rapid succession of events which go to make up a schoolboy's life, the beating inflicted upon Armond was forgotten by all but the recipient of it.

His manner was not openly hostile to Dick.

They seldom spoke, but if it was necessary for them to do so, Armond did not display the marked enmity Dick had expected.

Dick had joined the gymnasium class, which had taken the place of the swimming-bath class in the winter months.

Twice a week, once in the morning and once in the evening the boys went to Castle Square and practiced at Mohammed's Rooms.

These were famous premises and much patronized by the youths of Brighton.

Dick showed himself a proficient in all sorts of manly sports and exercises.

In leaping, jumping, the horizontal and parallel bars, the flying trapeze and other things, he could distance most of his competitors.

Armond and he were considered equal.

A match was arranged to take place between them on the trapeze, to decide which could spring farthest through the air.

Dick accepted the challenge, and felt sure of beating him.

"How civil Cocky Armond is to you since that night," observed Messiter.

"Yes; beastly civil. I can't make it out. Can you?" replied Dick.

"I can't, either. You would have thought he'd have been all the more savage."

"I don't quite like fellows who make up to you when they've got spite in their hearts, and they are as full of venom as a toad; but, after all, I'm not much afraid of Mr. B. B."

"Well, look out, that's all," replied Messiter. "It's easy enough to fall over anything in the dark, and he's not the sort of man to work by daylight."

"Who are you talking about?" asked Fowler, who joined them at this moment.

"Cocky Armond, B. B., as Lighthead christened him," replied Messiter.

"He owes me a grudge, I think," remarked Dick.

"But I don't fancy he's so bad as Harry wants to make him out."

"Isn't he? You don't know as much about him as I do," replied Fowler.

"Does he hate me?"

"Like steam. I heard him talking to some fellows in the first form the other day, and he swore he'd be revenged upon you for all you've done to him."

"What have I done?" asked Dick, with a smile of injured innocence.

"Oh, nothing!" replied Fowler. "Of course it's nothing to give a fellow a mouse in the eye and loosen his teeth. It isn't much to give him a nickname, which you have done, for there isn't a boy in the school who don't call him either Cocky or B. B. Of course it's nothing to leather him within an inch of his life! Oh, no! you've done nothing to Cocky Armond, and he's got no right to hate you."

"I don't fear him. A man who has no enemies has no character; a fellow who has any mind and is anything like a fellow must have enemies," replied Dick.

"Didn't you say you knew more about him than most people?" remarked Messiter.

"So I do," answered Fowler.

"Tell us. We won't chaff him."

"Won't you? Promise me you won't tell, and I'll let you know who he is, and all about him."

The boys readily gave Fowler the required promise, and looked on him full of eager curiosity.

"The cook told me," said Fowler. "Before she came here she was servant in Armond's family. You know I often go into the kitchen, and the cook likes me; she gives me bits of things when I'm hungry."

"Never mind what she gives you," said Dick; "get on to Armond."

"I'm coming to him. His father's a cowheel-boiler and tripe-dresser in Whitechapel, who does a bit of stiff sometimes."

"What's that?" asked Messiter.

"Lends money on a bill of exchange, and a couple of halves ago old Simcox was hard up, and flew a kite."

"I'm in the dark again," Messiter said.

"What a child you are," said Fowler; "you don't know anything. If you interrupt me like this, I shall never finish my story."

"But what's a kite?"

"It's another phrase for doing a bill, borrowing money at interest to be repaid in a certain time. Well, Simcox did this, and somehow or other the tripe-dresser—"

"Armond's father?"

"Yes. He got hold of it in the way of business, and Simcox couldn't pay. It was a good bit; a hundred pounds, I think, and the end of it was that Simcox agreed to take the young Armond into his school for two years until the money was worked out."

"What a lark," said Dick. "He don't really pay anything, then?"

"He does pay, after a fashion, but not as we do."

"Won't I chaff him?" continued Dick. "Oh! oh! not at all. Cowheels and boiled tripe. Oh! my."

"You promised you wouldn't," said Fowler.

"I couldn't keep my promise, if I tried. The first time he affronts me out it will come. I shall call him the tripe-dressing charity lad."

"I wish I hadn't told you," said Fowler. "But at all events you won't mention my name or say how you found it out."

"Oh, no, I'll take all the responsibility on myself. Are you coming to Mohammed's to-night?"

"The gymnasium?"

"Yes."

"What's on?" asked Fowler.

"My match on the flying trapeze with Armond."

"Oh, I forgot. Yes, of course I'll be there."

"If you've got any spare bobs and want to bet, back me. I'm sure to lick him, though he is all legs and wings," continued Dick.

The boys separated, as the school-bell rang, and they went in to lessons.

In the evening, those who subscribed to the gymnasium, went to Castle Square, and the trapeze was got ready for the opponents.

Armond made himself very busy in arranging the ropes, of which there were three.

The trapeze consists of two ropes hanging from the ceiling; at the end of these is a horizontal bar.

To this, the player holds on by his hands, and swings backwards and forwards.

Then he jumps in the air, catches the middle one by the bar, and swings again and darts forward to the third.

The ropes were placed a good distance apart, and it was certainly a feat to go from one to the other.

The distance from the ground was about six feet, so that if the player fell heavily, he might hurt himself considerably.

They were about to toss for the first trial when Armond said:

"Oh! we won't toss, I'll give Lighthead the first chance."

Accordingly Dick seized the bar, swung backwards and forwards, and looked the very picture of an athlete.

Suddenly he launched himself forth and caught the middle bar.

Then he prepared to fly to the third; a burst of applause had greeted his first successful flight.

Once, twice, thrice, he got close to the third trapeze. But he refused to take the leap.

All at once, and without any warning, he turned round and jumped back to the first bar. A murmur of disappointment arose.

What could be his motive for such extraordinary conduct?

No one could tell.

He had done the first part of the exercise in a manner which had suggested that he would accomplish the other with equal dexterity.

He was very pale when he gained the ground and trembled a little.

Messiter came up to him and said:

"Are you ill, old fellow?"

Dick made him no answer.

The attendant, who had charge of the room, pushed his way through the crowd and also came up to Dick.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE ACCIDENT.

"WHAT'S the matter, sir?" asked the attendant.

"Come over dizzy?"

"A little," replied Dick. "But that's not it."

"Anything wrong with the ropes?"

"I don't know; let Armond go first. I shall be all right presently. It's only a passing faintness; let Armond start."

"Certainly," replied the attendant, whose name was Jackson. "That's fair enough; the gentleman won't mind taking your turn and giving you a little time."

Turning to the crowd of boys, Jackson said:

"It's nothing unusual to see a gentleman turn a little nervous at time. It soon passes off, and they get right again."

Armond, however, did not attempt to take Dick's place.

"Now, sir," cried Jackson, who was a tall, thin, active-looking fellow of five and thirty, and had been a private soldier in the army.

"I'm not ready," replied Armond.

"You're stripped. You've got your flannels and shoes on. Cut along. Keep the ball rolling."

"No," answered Armond, who went whiter every moment. "I don't see why I should. It was agreed that Lighthead should go first, and why he should want to back out of his agreement I can't tell."

"You see he's gone a little queer," said Jackson.

"I can't help that."

"What are you afraid of? Look at me," exclaimed the attendant. "I'll show you how to do the flying trapeze."

As he spoke, he sprang up to the perch from which the trapezist started.

This conversation had been carried on a little distance from Dick, and he did not hear it.

"Shall I get you a glass of water?" asked Messiter.

"I wish you would," replied Dick.

"Stop a moment then. I want to see this cove perform."

"Which? Is Armond going to do it? If so, I must have been mistaken, though I'll swear I saw—"

He stopped abruptly.

Looking up, he saw that Armond was not upon the trapeze, but that Jackson was.

The attendant was in the act of balancing himself for the final spring.

"Hold hard," cried Dick, at the top of his voice. "For God's sake don't jump." Jackson paid no attention to him. "Stop, I say," continued Dick, in a still louder key. "Some villain's cut the ropes!" The warning came too late. Jackson had taken the leap. The next moment, the bar he had grasped on the third trapeze gave way beneath his pressure, and he fell to the ground with a dull thud. He had fallen on his back, and lay perfectly still and insensible.

The blood oozing from his mouth, eyes, nose and ears. "Is he dead?" asked the boys, in a fearful whisper. Armond was the first to run to pick him up. In an excited tone he cried: "This is infamous! Lightheart must have done this!" "Don't you say that," cried Messiter, who was by his side.

"Why not?" said Armond. "Didn't he shirk the last bar, and all he knew to get me to go on ahead of him?"

"Lightheart has not been here all day, and had nothing to do with the arrangement of the ropes; and you were here this morning in the playhour. So shut up about other people."

"I can't talk to you now, my good man," said Armond, "run for a doctor, some of you."

"What's he been saying about me?" asked Dick, who had heard his name mentioned.

"He says you cut the ropes," answered Messiter; "but don't take any notice of him now."

"Won't I, by Jove!" said Dick. "Turn round, you cowheel-peeling tripe-boiling son of a cent. per cent. bill discounter!"

This was addressed to Armond, who confronted him savagely, yet in a shamefaced manner.

This torrent of invective had taken Armond by surprise, for he did not think anyone knew who or what his people were.

"What do you mean?" asked Armond, his under lip dropping a little.

"What I say."

"I think you might have more decency than to attack me just now. You see that I am trying to do the best I can in the absence of a doctor, for the man wounded through your criminal folly."

"My folly!" answered Dick.

"Yes. To cut the ropes of a trapeze is going a little beyond a joke," rejoined Armond.

"Confound your impudence!" exclaimed Dick, beside himself with rage and astonishment. "Why, I never went near the ropes."

"Why did you stop as you did, and want me to go on?"

"I should have stopped you if you had done so, because I should then have known that it wasn't you who did it."

"Nor was it," rejoined Armond.

"Oh, yes, it was," said Dick. "Your refusal to take my turn quite convinced me of that, my boy. But I'll have it out of you. I'll be upades with you before I'm done."

"Your violence will not do you any good," said Armond; adding, "When will those boys come back with the doctor?"

"You're nothing better than a charity boy," continued Dick.

"That's low, vulgar abuse, and I shall not lower myself by answering you," replied Armond.

"Does your father pay for you?"

"Yes."

"After a fashion," laughed Dick. "He had a bill of the governor's, which was dishonored, and you are working it out."

Armond glared at him as if he could have sprang at his throat and strangled him. But he did not.

He was holding, or rather, supporting the head of the unfortunate attendant in the gymnasium, and looking up in Dick's face with a sort of mildness the wolf assumes when he wants to humbug the lamb, he said:

"Do confine yourself to the point, Lightheart, if you must talk."

"I am sticking to the point, and the point is your villainy," replied Dick.

"Or your own. Who shall say which? How did you know the rope was cut if you didn't do it yourself?"

"Shall I tell you?" replied Dick.

"If you can."

"When I got close to the third trapeze, and was about to spring, I saw, or thought I saw, that the strands of the rope had been cut low down close to the bar, and it was God's mercy that I drew back in time."

"A very clever get out, but it won't do," said Armond, with a sneer.

"We shall see, Mr. Cocky Armond," answered Dick—"we shall see, Mr. B. B., Mr. Cowheel-boiler, tripe-dresser, charity boy, rope-cutter, etc."

This wordy war, which was not very seemly in the presence of the wounded man, was put a stop to by the entrance of the proprietor of the gymnasium, who had been advised of the accident, and had brought a doctor who lived a few doors off.

An examination of the attendant's injuries showed that his skull was fractured, and that his system had received a severe shock, though it was not thought that his spine was hurt.

"He will be well again in six weeks or a couple of months," said the doctor. "But he has had a narrow escape of his life. How did it happen?"

A dozen boys volunteered an explanation.

Some said Lightheart did it, others declared that Armond was the culprit, while others again said the rope had broken.

The proprietor and the doctor examined the ropes. They had decidedly been cut with a knife, and left to

hang by a mere thread, so that an accident was inevitable.

A cab having been fetched, the attendant was removed to his home, and the doctor accompanied him.

The proprietor of the gymnasium told the boys to wait until the usher came for them, and then to return home.

"Mr. Snarley," he said, "has only gone to smoke a cigar on the beach. He will be back directly. This is a bad business, boys—a bad business, and I did not think it of any of you."

"Please, sir, I hope you don't think that I would be guilty of such a despicable act?" exclaimed Armond.

"I say nothing at present, except that it must be investigated. If the trapeze had been missed in the ordinary way, you would have come down on your feet, and have had nothing worse than a slight shake; but to cut the ropes. Ah, it is a bad business, and some one is the villain."

Messiter was by Dick's side, and he said:

"Go up and speak to him."

"I shan't. I'm innocent, and it must come all right by and by," replied Dick.

"Won't it look well to"—

"You're too anxious, Harry. Let the thing alone. It's all right as it stands. I know what I'm about," interrupted Dick.

Mr. Snarley was much shocked when he heard what had happened, and that one of his boys was suspected of having caused the accident.

He would not believe it, and declared that the young gentlemen of Harrow House School were incapable of doing anything of the sort.

The ropes were shown him, and though they looked as if they had been cut, he was inclined to think that old age had caused them to snap.

He walked home with Armond, to whom he said:

"It never does to admit that one is in the wrong, and, for the credit of the school, we must make them prove it."

"I agree with you, sir," rejoined Armond. "There is no doubt that Lightheart cut the rope to be revenged upon me; but, as you say, let them prove it, if he won't confess."

"There must always be a motive for a crime, and, as you say, he hates you."

"Fiercely; and other boys have told me what he has threatened to do to me."

"I am glad the young assistant was not much hurt. It might have been a serious affair. Fancy his breaking his neck. There would have been an inquest, which would have resulted in the ruin and break-up of the school."

"I forgive Lightheart for what he tried to do to me, sir," exclaimed Armond, "and have no wish to expose him."

"The affair must be hushed up, and I will get up a general subscription among those who attend the gymnasium for the injured man."

"A good idea, sir; I will give five shillings willingly."

"And I," said Mr. Snarley, "will head the list with half a sovereign. This will pay his doctor's bill and put him all right."

"I hope, though," exclaimed Armond, "that the boys will show their destitution of such a dirty trick by cutting Lightheart."

"I should think they would look very coldly upon him. Boys do not like any underhand work," answered Snarley.

It happened, however, that the school was divided in opinion about the outrage.

Some took Armond's side.

Others took Dick's.

In numbers they were pretty nearly equal, and so it came about that there were two parties, the Armondites and the Lightheartites.

These hated one another, and frequent fights took place.

From the height to which public feeling ran, it was not at all unlikely that some day there would be a battle royal between them.

Time passed, and the mystery was unsolved. One-half of the school believed that Dick cut the rope to injure Armond.

The other half religiously held the opinion that Armond had tried to kill Dick by making the last trapeze insecure.

The attendant progressed satisfactorily; the amount of the subscription, including five pounds from Messrs. Simcox and Markwell was sent to him, and out of the school the affair was forgotten.

At Harrow House, however, the hatred between the Lightheartites and the Armondites rather increased than abated.

Civil wars are always the most cruel and ferocious. School quarrels are equally prolonged and dangerous.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. SNARLEY PERFORMS IN PUBLIC.

THE boys worked hard and made great progress in their studies under the new system of tuition.

Messrs. Simcox and Markwell determined to give them a treat.

Circulars and advertisements announced the fact that the Great Bounce was coming to the Pavilion at Brighton, to give a series of concerts for a limited number of nights.

It would be a good opportunity for the boys to acquire a taste for music and have an evening's entertainment.

Morning school had just commenced.

Lightheart and Messiter were in Mr. Slocum's class, which was called the third form.

They were construing and parsing Latin.

Each had a volume of *Cæsar* before him, and was ap-

parently taking a great interest in the great conqueror's war in Gaul.

Fowler had just sat down after acquitting himself satisfactorily.

Mr. Slocum's eye traveled round the benches until it rested on Dick, who by hanging down his head, hoped he would not be selected.

Alas! it was the device of the ostrich, and equally inefficacious.

"Lightheart!" exclaimed Mr. Slocum.

"Sir," replied Dick, who not having prepared the lesson out of school, as he ought to have done, scarcely knew a word of it.

"You will stand up and construe, but first of all answer me a few questions. We have this morning met with the *Campus Martius*. What does that mean?"

"*Campus* means a field, sir," replied Dick.

"Very well. Go on."

"Then *Campus Martius* must mean the field-marshal, sir."

There was a laugh at this amongst the better informed, but Mr. Slocum instantly suppressed it.

"Silence there, or I will give you fifty lines all round," he said, sternly. "Understand, Lightheart, that *Campus Martius* does not mean field-marshal or anything like it. I take it to be the name of a place, which you might call the Martial Field, or Field of Mars. Mar's Field—do you see?"

"Why not Pa's Field, sir," said Dick, with an innocent look.

"Write out and translate the lesson for that," cried Mr. Slocum, savagely.

"Please, sir, you said it was the martial field and said it was the field-marshal. What's the difference? I only put the cart before the horse."

"That is a stupid proceeding of which only a clumsy person would be guilty. Now, attention. We have in the next line the word *amandum*."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, what is *amandum*?"

"A man dumb, sir? Why, a chap that has't got the use of his tongue—a dumb chap, in fact. You put the cart before the horse this time, sir. I should have thought that any child would have known a dumb man was a cove—I mean a"—

"Silence!" said Mr. Slocum, in his most awful tone.

The boys stopped their tittering with difficulty. It is difficult to prevent boys from laughing when their fancies are once tickled.

They saw that Dick had gone in for chaffing Slocum, and they meant to enjoy the treat accordingly.

"You, Lightheart, will write out and translate the lesson twice. If boys will be funny, they must pay for the privilege."

"Please sir," began Dick.

"Silence. Now what is *amandum*?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Yes, you do. Tell me instantly, or I will have you flogged," cried Mr. Slocum.

His blood was up now, and he did not intend to be beaten by Dick.

"Part of the verb *amo*, sir," said Dick.

"Very good. I thought we should find your memory presently," said Mr. Slocum, with a pleasant smile.

"Now go on. What part is it?"

"What part, sir?"

"Yes. Gerund or supine?"

"Supine, sir," replied Dick, whose ideas about verbs, when he got out of the indicative mood, were rather vague.

"No," thundered Mr. Slocum.

"Then it must be a gerund," said Dick.

"Right. It is a gerund. Now, attention. There are gerunds in *di*, *do*, *dum*. What is this a gerund in?"

"*Di*," replied Dick; adding quickly, "No, never say *die*, sir."

"Oh! at it again, are you?" cried Mr. Slocum, getting purple with rage. "You will oblige me by writing out and translating this lesson three times, in addition to which you will write one hundred times: 'I will make no more bad puns.'"

"I call them very good ones," said Dick, ruefully.

"Silence! Now, attention! It is not a gerund in *di*."

"Do, sir," said Dick.

"No, sir. How can *amandum* be a gerund in *do*?"

exclaimed Mr. Slocum, with subdued fury.

"Dum, then, sir," replied Dick, getting it right at last.

"The conclusion is inevitable. Now, in order to impress the fact upon your unretentive mind," exclaimed Mr. Slocum, "you will write out"—

Fortunately for Dick, Mr. Simcox's voice was heard at the end of the room, as he stood by Mr. Markwell's desk.

"Boys, I have a word to say to you!"

Mr. Slocum broke off, and forgot to say what further punishment he should inflict upon Dick.

"Bother gerunds!" muttered Dick. "I hate 'em."

"Boys," continued Mr. Simcox, "it is proposed by Mr. Markwell and myself to give you all a treat."

"This resolution has been come to owing to your good conduct during the term which is now approaching its completion."

The Great Bounce, an artist of celebrity, is about to give a concert at the Pavilion.

"It is proposed that you should attend it in a body."

Loud cheers followed this announcement, and Dick screamed himself black in the face.

Mr. Simcox held up his hand again.

"But," he said, "as we never like to do anything without the permission of parents, as some object to stage plays, concerts, etc., as vanities, you will please write home, ask your parents' and guardian's consent, informing them at the same time that the charge will be a uniform one of half-a-crown, which will be put down in the bill."

Dick bent down and whispered to Messiter:

"I thought he wouldn't stand the treat himself."

"He's too stingy," said Messiter.
 "Writing-paper and envelopes will be supplied you by Mr. Snarley," Mr. Simcox went on, "and I will sketch a letter on the large slate, which you will please copy."

"Hurrah! Hoo-rah!" cried Dick. "Now, boys! Hoorah-ah-ah!"

Unfortunately nobody followed his lead, and he was frightened at his own voice.

"Lightheart," said Mr. Simcox, "be good enough to restrain your impetuosity. Probably the sound of your own voice is more pleasing to yourself than it is to others."

Dick collapsed.

Mr. Simcox took up a piece of chalk and wrote on the big slate:

"My dear father, mother, guardian (as the case may be)—I have sincere pleasure in informing you that our general good conduct and admirable and steady progress in our studies"—

"Especially in gerunds," whispered Dick to Messiter.

"During that part of the half which has already elapsed, has induced our kind and respected head masters, Mr. Simcox and Mr. Markwell, to propose giving us a great treat."

"The celebrated Bounce has arranged a series of concerts in the great hall of the Pavilion, and we are to attend in a body, if the proposal meets with your approval."

"The small charge of half-a-crown will be made for each of us, which it is presumed you will not object to pay, for this superlative gratification to us. The soothing and elevating art of music is highly calculated to refresh our minds, and I trust, my dear father, mother, guardian (as the case may be), that I shall receive an early reply from you, granting the request which I make to you in this letter."

"I am glad to add that my health is excellent. I am very happy, and feel that I would not exchange the enlightened management, the home treatment, including a liberal diet, and the splendid education I am receiving at the hands of Messrs. Simcox & Markwell for that of any other school in the world."

"I am,

"My dear father, mother, guardian
 (as the case may be),

"Your ever affectionate
 and dutiful son
 "_____,"

"Isn't the governor laying it on thick?" remarked Messiter.

"Rather," replied Dick. "It's awful rot, though. What's the good of making us tell such a heap of lies?"

"You mean about being happy, and the liberal diet," answered Messiter.

"Yes. If I send for a second cut of mutton, I only get a mangy little slice that wouldn't nourish a two-year-old."

"No talking," exclaimed Mr. Slocum, as Snarley came round with the paper.

For the next half hour the boys were engaged in the pleasant pastime of writing their letters.

Dick, out of pure mischief, copied the words on the slate verbatim, putting in "my dear father, mother, guardian (as the case may be)," each time they occurred.

"Have you finished, Lightheart?" asked Mr. Slocum, seeing him sucking the end of his pen.

"Yes, sir."

"Hand me your letter."

Dick did so, and stood by his side while he looked it over.

"You stupid boy," said Mr. Slocum. "You should not put in father, mother, or guardian. You have a father, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then. Write this over again, and put simply 'my dear father.'"

"Dick took it back, and did as he was told, but he kept the first letter, and made the boys laugh by showing it to them out of school."

Of course the required permission came from the fathers, mothers, guardians (as the case was), and the concert was looked forward to with great interest.

"Can Snarley sing?" Dick asked Fowler.

"Not a note. A raven might, and a screech owl might, but Snarley never got beyond the Old Hundredth psalm or a hymn in his life," replied Fowler.

Everybody asked Fowler questions about everything, because he had been longer in the school than anyone else.

"Snarley shall sing," replied Dick.

"Shall! What do you mean?" said Fowler.

"You'll see," answered Dick, with a smile.

When the evening came, the evening on which the concert was to be given, the boys dressed themselves in their "Sunday best," as Dick remarked, and were marched two and two to the Pavilion.

They filed into the seats appointed for them, Dick taking care to obtain a corner near the stage. The Great Bounce divided his concert into two parts—the first was serious and sentimental and made one weep; the second was comic and noisy, and caused one to laugh.

Great was the applause when the curtain fell on the first part.

The boys were delighted, and the Great Bounce received an ovation.

Seeing an attendant come by, Dick put a note in his hand.

"Who is this for?" asked the attendant.

"Our usher, Mr. Snarley, wants it to be given to the Great Bounce, himself," replied Dick.

"Mr. Bounce is having a glass of sherry wine in a private room back of the stage," replied the attendant.

"All the better. Give him the note, and say it came from one of our ushers," replied Dick.

The man went away and knocking at the door of the

private room, found Mr. Bounce regaling himself as he had said.

"What's this?" asked the great man, who was a stout, good-natured, jolly-looking fellow.

"Note for you, sir."

"Who from?"

"Gentleman name of Snarley; one of the ushers in this 'ere school, sir."

"Wait," exclaimed Mr. Bounce, taking the note and reading its contents, which were as follows:

"RESPECTED AND ACCOMPLISHED SIR:

"I am an humble follower of your art, and my favorite song is 'By the Sad Sea Waves I Left My Loved One Weeping.' You may not be acquainted with it, as it is my own composition; it is, however, my ambition to sing it, during the interval that has to elapse between the serious and comic parts of your unparalleled entertainment. May I make so bold as to ask you to introduce me to the audience as formerly a pupil of your own. I can assure you I shall not disgrace you, as my reputation as a sentimental singer is very high. I shall ever be your deeply grateful and obliged servant,

SAMUEL SNARLEY."

"Fourth form master at Harrow House School, Kemp Town, Brighton."

When the Great Bounce had finished reading the letter, he said:

"Go and ask Mr. Snarley to come to me at once."

"Yes, sir," replied the messenger.

He went back to Dick, who was anxiously awaiting his appearance.

"Where's the gentleman who wrote the note?" asked the man.

"Mr. Snarley, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"He's there. That tall, thin man in a white choker."

"White what, sir? Beg pardon, but"—

"White tie, you fool!" replied Dick. "Cut along—make haste."

The man pushed his way to Mr. Snarley, and touched him on the shoulder.

"It's all right, sir. I'm the attendant."

"All right! What's all right? I was not aware anything was wrong," replied Snarley.

"Governor wants you. Quick, sir."

"Who?"

"Mr. Bounce, sir. He as is performing."

"Oh! he wants to see me, does he?"

"Yes, sir," replied the attendant.

"Where is he? In the private room, I suppose?"

"That's just where you'll find him, sir. Follow me."

"Did he say Snarley? Are you sure that he said 'I want to see Mr. Snarley'?"

"Them was his very words, sir," answered the messenger.

"Lead on, I will follow," exclaimed Snarley. He left his seat and went after the attendant to the private room, which communicated with the stage by a door in the scenery.

Mr. Bounce was standing on the threshold of this door.

He only had to push the curtains a little on one side to be in front of the audience.

"Ahem!" began Mr. Snarley, "a Mr. Bounce, I believe?"

"That's me," said the great singer, rather ungrammatically.

"I am proud, more than proud, to make the acquaintance of so distinguished a gentleman, whose celebrity has"—

"Cut it short, please; time for the second part will be up directly, and boy audiences are apt to kick up a shindy if you keep them waiting," said Mr. Bounce.

"But, my dear sir, I"—

"Come along this way. Make haste: and, I say"—

Bounce bent down as Mr. Snarley approached him, and added:

"Don't listen to an encore—that's do it over again, you know."

"Certainly not. I don't quite understand," stammered Mr. Snarley. "But if it is your wish"—

"It is, Mr. Snarley, and now come on, sir; they are beginning to stamp their feet. Come on."

"Come on—as Shakespeare says—come on, Macduff. No, I don't mean that, it's Macduff. Come on, Macduff!" exclaimed Mr. Snarley, attempting to be jocose, and breaking down lamentably.

"Mind you don't turn out a duffer," said the Great Bounce, adding: "Give me your hand; I'll lead you on and give 'em a word."

"Give them what?"

"A little patter; that's what you want, isn't it? Come along."

The next moment he had pushed aside the curtain and appeared upon the stage, leading Mr. Snarley by the hand.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN AWKWARD FIX

It was Mr. Snarley's first appearance in public, and he took very good care it should be the last one.

He could not understand why or wherefore he had been led on to the platform.

But as the great singer was with him he thought it must be all right.

The flood of light which came from the gas lamps nearly blinded him.

For a short time the audience floated before him indistinctly; but after a while he made out familiar faces clearly, especially those of Mr. Markwell and Mr. Simcox, whereon rested a cloud of wonder, not unmixed with indignation.

First of all came the rows of benches, filled with boys who occupied the arena.

Then came the outside public, in the more expensive seats.

All had their gaze upon him.

"I wonder what it all means?" said Mr. Snarley to himself.

Leading him to the edge of the footlights, the Great Bounce said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is with pride and pleasure that I present to your favorable notice Mr. Samuel Snarley, the respected assistant in Harrow House School, that famous seminary for young gentlemen."

At this there was great cheering among the boys, in which the public joined.

"Go it, Snarley; never say die."

This was from Dick, who was thinking of gerunds.

"Mr. Snarley," resumed the Great Bounce, "is desirous of occupying your time for a few minutes. He is not going to trespass on your good nature long, but when I inform you that years ago he was a most promising pupil of my own, and that his ability is second to none, you will, no doubt, wish he were here to entertain you in my place."

Pulling the great singer by the sleeve, Snarley in vain endeavored to arrest his attention.

"He will sing you," continued Bounce, "'By the Sad Sea Waves I Left My Loved One Drinking'—no, that's not it; it's a fragment of his own composition, and I'm not quite sure of the title."

Here he glanced at the note he held in his hand.

"Oh! I remember now," he added; "it's by the sad sea waves. Yes, 'By the Sad Sea Waves I Left My Loved One Weeping.' Beautiful thing, ladies and gentlemen."

Bending to the orchestra, he said:

"Strike up, music. Anything in two sharps, and not too loud, will do."

A tremendous shout of applause at this announcement rent the air.

The Great Bounce rushed hastily back behind the curtain.

Mr. Snarley stood like one rooted to the spot. He was deadly pale.

He would have run away too, but it was necessary to say something, as he began to see that he was the victim of a shameful hoax.

Though why the Great Bounce should play off his pleasantry upon him he was at a loss to imagine.

"Hurrah for Snarley!" cried the boys. "Order, order for Snarley's song!"

The orchestra began to play a plaintive air.

"My dear boys," said Mr. Snarley in a dreadfully weak voice.

"Sing! sing!" roared the boys.

Mr. Simcox looked at Mr. Markwell, and the latter, regarded Mr. Simcox.

"Dear me," said Mr. Simcox, "this is very strange. I did not know that our friend Snarley was a man of musical attainments."

"Nor I," returned Mr. Markwell; "it is singular that he should not have said anything to us about it."

"Or asked our permission," observed Professor Simcox.

"Quite so. It is bold on his part, and I do not think he will increase his authority among the boys by thrusting himself forward in this way."

"I have heard Snarley play the fiddle to a slight extent, and he has followed my lead in the Old Hundredth on a Sunday evening," said Mr. Simcox.

"That's a different thing. His putting himself on a level, as it were, with professionals is intolerable presumption," replied Mr. Markwell.

During this conversation the shouts, screams, cat-calls and cries of the boys, increased alarmingly.

Snarley bowed and put his hand on his heart. The orchestra having played the first bar of the music they had selected as suitable for his song, stopped.

"Order!" cried Dick, "he's going to begin."

Instantly there was a dead silence.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Snarley, "there is some mistake here."

"I thought so," observed Mr. Markwell.

"I am the victim of a cruel joke," continued Snarley.

"Didn't I say so," remarked Mr. Simcox.

"Sing, sing!" cried the boys.

"I cannot sing," exclaimed Mr. Snarley, getting in a passion. "I never sang a song in my life. I tell you it's a joke."

"What did you get on the platform for?" cried Dick.

"It's all nonsense. No more rot, no more humbug. Give us a hymn if you can't do anything else."

Driven to desperation, Mr. Snarley replied:

"I could do a hymn, a trifle of Dr. Watts, if that would please you, and calm this excitement. Let us say, 'Dogs delight,' or 'Twas the voice of the sing-gard,' or 'I've been there and still would go.'"

"Go home and put your head in a bag," said a wag in the shilling seats.

Mr. Snarley attempted to speak again, but his voice was drowned in shouts of laughter.

The absurdity of his proposal was so transparent and mirth-provoking that the audience found it irresistible.

The confusion now reached its height.

Mr. Simcox, greatly scandalized, said:

"Is he drunk?"

"I should remonstrate with him," said Mr. Markwell.

"I will."

Getting upon a chair, the professor said:

"Mr. Snarley, retire. I order you sir, to retire."

Amidst renewed howling and cheering, the unfortunate usher made a rush for the curtain.

"Bolted," said Messiter.

"Stole away," cried Dick. "After him, fetch him back. Snarley, sing, sing, sing."

But Mr. Snarley, boiling over with rage, dashed through the door into the private room. The great singer regarded him complacently.

"Well?" he said, "how did you get on? You seem to be a favorite. The boys are making noise enough."

"What is the meaning of this outrage, demanded Snarley. "Why did you lead me on to that platform, to make me look ridiculous? I am the laughing stock of everybody!"

"Can't you sing?"

"No. I never could in my life."

"Why did you send me this letter?" asked the Great Bounce.

"What letter? Show it me."

Mr. Snarley took the letter which Dick had written and concocted.

The truth dawned upon him.

It was a hoax.

"I did not write this," he said. "It is a device of the enemy. I see it all now."

"Eh?" cried the Great Bounce. "Not write it! Then we have, in the language of the poets, been sold. Awkward rather, very, as it makes me look foolish as well as you."

"I acquit you of blame, sir," replied Mr. Snarley. "But when I discover the delinquent, I will have it out of him."

"Can't talk any more now. Got no time," said Mr. Bounce. "Must go on again at once. Very sorry, but can't be helped."

Showing Mr. Snarley the way out of the room into the hall, he went on the stage, and soon put his audience in a good temper by his comicalities and excellent singing.

Mr. Snarley at once sought the head masters, showed them the letter, and explained how he came to make an exhibition of himself.

"Whose writing is this?" asked Mr. Simcox.

"I know not; the hand is disguised," replied Mr. Snarley. "I wish I did know—that's all."

It was fortunate for Dick that his handwriting was disguised, or he would have been found out.

So perturbed was Mr. Snarley's mind, that he did not think of asking the attendant who had given him the note, and Dick was not discovered.

Dick and Messiter had many a laugh in private over this joke, but they did not take anyone into their confidence.

The incident was soon forgotten by the masters, though Mr. Snarley was often greeted with the cries of "Sing, sing."

One day the boys were out walking, and they saw a placard on a wall announcing the last grand *fete* at the Swiss Gardens at Shoreham.

"Look at that," exclaimed Dick.

"ROYAL SWISS GARDENS."

"Positively the last Monster *Fete* of the present season."

"Great combination of attractions, including performances in the theater, boating on the lakes, swings, bowls and other amusements."

"Refreshments of the first quality."

"The proprietor has great pleasure in announcing that he has at a large cost, secured the services of the accomplished and renowned Miss Agatha Mountserratt, who has appeared before all the crowned heads in Europe."

"Why, that's my pretty Polly," exclaimed Dick.

"Your Polly," said Messiter.

"Yes, I saved her from falling down the trap the night I went to the circus with Lieutenant Smart."

"Shouldn't I like to go!"

"Would you?"

"Yes," replied Messiter. "It would be a spree."

"We'll go together," said Dick.

"How? We can't get out, and if we could, we should be missed and flogged when we came back."

"No we shan't. I've got a dodge," said Dick.

"What is it?"

"I'll write a letter in my father's hand, which I can imitate to a T. It shall be directed to Professor Simcox, and in it he shall ask his permission for me and my young friend Messiter to come and spend the day

with him, as he is in Brighton on business, and we are to come to him at the Bedford Hotel."

"Stunning," said Messiter. "But"—

"There is always a 'but' with you, Harry," exclaimed Dick; what new croak have you got on now?"

"We've no money. You told me you hadn't yesterday, and you know I lent you my last sixpence to buy tarts."

"So you did; I forgot that. By Jove! that is a lick; we can't do without tin," replied Dick doubtfully.

For once in his life he did not see the way out of the difficulty.

All the time they were out walking, Dick turned the matter over in his mind.

In the evening he and Messiter were together preparing their lessons.

The hum and buzz of the boys' voices enabled them to talk to one and another without being overheard.

Suddenly Dick grasped Messiter's arm, and said:

"I've got it, Harry!"

"Have you? Mind you keep it, then," replied Messiter.

He patted him on the back approvingly.

"Leave off. Don't mess me about," cried Dick. "I'm thinking, and that is"—

"Such an unwonted exertion that it makes you irritable."

"You shut up. We must raise the wink. To-day is Monday. The *fete* takes place next Monday. So we have got a week to work in."

"Let's write home," said Messiter.

"No good. My dad wouldn't part. He's going on the principle of keeping me short. It's bad for boys to have too much money, he says."

"That's just what mine says, though we are poor at home, and the old boy can't afford it. Still I could get five shillings' worth of stamps out of the mum."

"Try it on then. Every little will help," said Dick.

"We ought to have about a sovereign apiece."

"Oh! but wouldn't a sovereign each be a great deal more than we shall want?" Messiter said.

"Not at all. I mean to do the thing like a swell," answered Dick.

"The admission is only a shilling."

"I know that, but we must have reserved seats at the theater. I will have a boat on the lake, and go to the shooting gallery, and try our strength, and be weighed, and have ices and ginger beer, and a cold collation, as they call lamb and salad, or chicken and ham. I mean to go the entire animal, I can tell you."

"You generally do," said Messiter. "I will leave everything to you."

"Then you'll be right. Don't fluster yourself. I'll pull you through to the other side of Jordan, as the Great Bounce said in one of his songs, and give you such a day's sport as you never had in your life," replied Dick.

"Very well. Go on with your financial statement."

"I shall get over the wall to-morrow, and see if I can catch Emily and Henrietta in the play-ground at Miss Bodmin's. Girls have generally got money. They save up, and haven't so much opportunity of spending it as we have."

"That's good. You may borrow half a sovereign from each. What else?"

"See this box?" asked Dick, taking a good-sized money-box out of his locker.

"Yes; it's your old money-box. But you've pasted a paper over it; and what is that written on it?"

"Read for yourself."

Messiter did so, and read, "Charitable contributions for the purpose of sending out clothing to the savage tribes who now practice cannibalism and head-hunting on the coast of Africa, under Oke Jumbo. Collector Richard Lightheart."

"Oh Dick!" said Messiter, lost in admiration of the brilliant device. "You are a fellow."

Dick smiled proudly.

"Of course," he said, "I only mean to borrow the money till I get a supply from home, when I will return every farthing placed in the box."

"But who's this Oke Jumbo?" continued Messiter.

"Blest if I know," said Dick. "He's as good a peg to hang the affair on as anyone else."

"Do you think the fellows will subscribe?"

"Yes. I'll make them. Simcox, Markwell, Snarley, all of them shall. I'll tell them such moving tales that I'll make them weep, and it will be a case of some coppers in no time," said Dick.

"Why not ask them to lend the money?" said Messiter.

"That won't do," replied Dick. "They would want to know what it was for, and spoil our treat. No, I'll get the coin out of them by the box, and refund when father shells out."

Dick did not exaggerate his powers of persuasion, which he soon had an opportunity of trying upon Mr. Simcox.

When the boys had prepared their lessons, they were allowed to play at dominoes, draughts, chess or any game they liked, and in which they were proficient.

Putting away their books, Lightheart and Messiter began to play at dominoes.

The game went on with varying success, till Messiter could not play.

"Can't," said he, looking gloomily at sixes at each end.

"Can," exclaimed Dick, playing. "Good, old can-can. Six, two. Go on, Harry. You've got a two. Come in, old man, out of the wet."

Messiter played a two, and Dick played out, crying:

"Domino; you're beaten."

Mr. Simcox came up just as they had finished, and saw the subscription box.

"What have we here?" he asked, taking it up.

"Subscriptions wanted, sir, for the poor benighted savages, deprived of the blessings of respectable raiment," replied Dick.

"Ah! I perceive. South Africans. Very good. Oke Jumbo. Very good. Send out clothing—excellent," said Mr. Simcox, reading the appeal.

"Will you head the list with a trifle, sir? say half a guinea. It will look well, and the boys will follow your lead."

"Hem! half a sovereign is a large sum," replied the professor, putting his finger in his waistcoat pocket.

He had a peculiar way of saying "half," and called it "haaf."

"It will be money well laid out. Shall I write your name down, sir?" said Dick, taking up a sheet of foolscap.

Mr. Simcox hesitated, and the man who hesitates is lost.

Dick hastily wrote—"Professor Simcox, 10s.—paid."

The professor dropped the little gold coin into the box with a sigh.

"I am glad to see you engaged in so meritorious an enterprise, Lightheart," he said. "Indeed, your behavior is much better than it used to be, and I am pleased to behold the amendment."

"Thank you, sir. I'm only a little wild at times; and if there is any alteration in me, it is due to your excellent method of managing the boys under your care," replied Dick.

"I hope I am successful. I try to be, and pray that I may succeed," replied the professor, with a nasal noise something between a whine and a snort.

He passed on, and Messiter remarked:

"Can't you talk to them?"

"Like a Dutch uncle. We shall get our expenses out of this box," said Dick.

"And have something to spare for Oke Jumbo."

"I shan't spare a rap for Oke. Not if I know it," answered Dick, with a smile.

After this the subscription list filled up gaily; the boys gave their sixpences and shillings, and the masters also contributed.

And Dick said, "It began to look very much like going to Shoreham."

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